

DN disabilitynow

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Older MPs back winter fuel

DN CAMPAIGN



BY DN REPORTERS

Nearly 90 per cent of MPs who are eligible for winter fuel payments themselves support extending the benefit to severely disabled people, a DN survey has revealed.

About 120 MPs are believed to be eligible to receive the £200 annual payment.

Of the 42 who replied to our survey, 37 said they believed it should be extended to severely disabled people under the age of 60.

The results are published as ex work and pensions secretary David Blunkett, usually a fervent government loyalist, added his influential voice to calls for the payments to be extended.

He told DN he would back extending the payments to severely disabled people as



LEO WILKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

long as those receiving them were defined "very tightly".

The new leader of the Liberal Democrats, Sir Menzies Campbell, is one of the

MPs over the age of 60 to back our campaign.

Others include Neil Gerrard, Labour MP for Walthamstow, who said it was "completely unfair" that disabled people were "barred" from the payment.

Vincent Cable, MP for Twickenham and the Lib Dems' shadow chancellor, said he receives the payment but disabled people under 60 "have greater need and would make better use of the money".

Frank Cook, Labour MP for Stockton North, who also backed our campaign, said: "When I hear the Treasury say 'Can we afford [something like this]?' I think, 'What about Iraq?'... It doesn't cut any mustard with me now."

Other MPs over 60 to back the campaign include the Conservative MPs Tim Yeo, Ian Taylor and William Cash, as well as Liberal Democrat Alan Beith and Labour's Julie Morgan.

Meanwhile, a motion backing DN's campaign has been tabled in the Scottish Parliament by MSP Alex Neil, of the SNP.

It came as British Gas (BG)

hiked energy prices by 22 per cent in February, heightening concern that disabled people will find it even more difficult to pay their fuel bills.

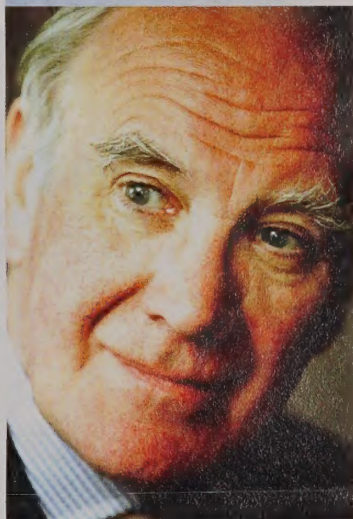
A spokesman for Centrica, owner of BG, told DN the company would provide disabled people on certain benefits with rebate payments of up to £90 next winter, up from £60 in 2005/2006.

He said energy efficiency, such as quality insulation, would cut down on costs and concerned customers should take advantage of BG's Here to Help scheme, which can survey homes, subsidize energy efficiency measures and give advice.

He denied that BG should be doing more to help those in fuel poverty and advised disabled people to contact their energy providers to "see how we can help you".

A spokeswoman for the Department for Work and Pensions said there were still no plans to extend winter fuel payments to severely disabled people under 60, despite the backing of MPs, fuel price hikes and recent evidence – revealed by DN – that disabled people are dying every winter because they

MPs who said 'yes'



Menzies Campbell



Tim Yeo



William Cash



Neil Gerrard



Ian Taylor



Glenda Jackson



Vincent Cable

cannot afford to heat their homes (DN January, front page).

She said disability benefits were already available to disabled people in recognition of the extra costs they faced because of their impairments.

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On the cover: Interview with David Blunkett, page 24-25. Picture by Graham Bool Photography

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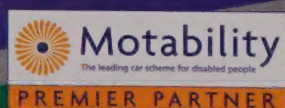
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Family lodge complaint after daughter's death

EXCLUSIVE BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

A disabled woman who was extremely sensitive to light and noise has died, months after her family warned that planned building work on their neighbour's house might affect her health (*DN*, December 2005).

Karen Williams, from Southport, who had Leigh's Syndrome, a very rare neurological condition, died at her home in early February, less than a month after the start of construction work.

Her father Jeremy said Karen began having more frequent and severe seizures after the

work started. He says light and noise caused Karen to have epileptic seizures.

She also developed a chest infection in the five days before she died, but her health had been improving after taking antibiotics. The death certificate put the cause of death as both the chest infection and Leigh's Syndrome.

Judith Cooper, one of Karen's carers for 16 years, says she thinks Karen would probably have recovered had it not been for the "quite severe" seizures.

The family have lodged a complaint with the local government ombudsman about

Sefton Council's decision to grant planning permission.

A council spokesman said: "We sympathise with the family in what is obviously a very distressing time for them. The original application took into account the views of the applicant and also objections from the Williams family.

"The decision was made entirely in line with planning law and guidelines. Throughout this process we did everything possible to ensure that the Williams family's needs were carefully considered - along with the right of their neighbours to extend their home."

Abuse probes show need for research

DN CAMPAIGN

Two new investigations into allegations of poor practice in institutions have again highlighted the need for government funding of research into the scale of abuse of adults with learning difficulties.

Adult protection agencies in Hertfordshire confirmed they have investigated claims of poor practice at the Gombards care home in Welwyn Garden City. The home for eight adults with learning difficulties is run by the

charity United Response (UR).

Hertfordshire County Council conducted a joint investigation with UR and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The council said it was carefully monitoring improvements.

Meanwhile, the Healthcare Commission (HC) has launched an investigation into allegations of physical and sexual abuse within the learning difficulties services run by Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust in Surrey.

Two former trust employees

have been charged with sexual offences.

Meanwhile, government-funded research from the charity Action on Elder Abuse found that, of 639 referrals to adult protection teams over six months and across nine local authorities last year, only five resulted in prosecutions.

The latest developments will increase pressure on the Department of Health to fund research into the scale of the abuse of adults with learning difficulties, as called for by campaigners in *DN* last month.

Row over statue



Mental health charity Rethink has sparked a huge row after unveiling a statue of Winston Churchill in a straitjacket.

The statue was designed to draw attention to the fact that Britain's wartime leader had manic depression.

It was unveiled last month by Ian Gibson MP (pictured, left, with Rethink's chief executive, Cliff Prior) in Norwich's Forum centre, as part of an exhibition to illustrate Rethink's anti-stigma campaign in the city.

But following complaints from the Churchill family and the public, the centre's tenants voted to order Rethink to remove the statue.

Rethink admitted it had not described the statue to the Forum before it was unveiled.

A Forum spokesman said:

"Quite clearly it was controversial and we would have consulted with our tenants had we known what it was.

"It was very clear that the Churchill family were upset by this and had already, we believe, blocked the display of this in London.

"We have been inundated by people who were very, very upset. There was a strong message coming through from the public that this great leader was being mocked."

Rethink said it was "saddened and disappointed" at the reaction, but hoped to find the statue a new location.

A spokesman said: "Despite the fact that he had a mental illness he was able to achieve so much. It was meant to be a celebration of his life."

In brief

Families get benefits help

A new campaign has been launched to help families of disabled children claim all the benefits they are entitled to.

Pounds for Parents*, run by charity Contact a Family, will provide advice and information to parents who may be "simply exhausted" or unaware of how the benefits system works.

*Tel: 0808 808 3555 or www.cafamily.org.uk

Barriers found in sport

Lack of funding and planning from London boroughs could exclude disabled people from being included in sport and participating in the 2012 Paralympic Games, an inquiry by a London Assembly committee has found.

Poor transport, lack of adapted facilities and substandard training for coaches were noted as "key barriers".

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GLAD loses tribunal

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

A disabled woman was unfairly dismissed by London's leading organisation of disabled people, a tribunal has found.

Brenda Ellis (pictured) said Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD) had behaved in a "ludicrous" fashion.

Ms Ellis launched the action against GLAD after she was sacked as director of policy and projects in February 2005, following three charges of misconduct against her.

The three allegations, which centred on Ms Ellis's four-month spell as acting co-chief executive, included that she knew and did nothing about



continuing alleged fraudulent Access to Work claims made by two former members of staff.

The tribunal heard how Ms Ellis was also blamed for failing to act on allegations of false petty cash claims and an incident of theft.

The tribunal panel "unanimously" concluded that Ms Ellis had been unfairly dismissed and ordered GLAD to

pay out just under £35,000 as compensation.

Ms Ellis said: "I feel at least I've cleared my name. I've exposed GLAD for being ludicrous. They've lost out, frankly, they've lost out big time."

She added that she has now been able to "move on" and felt happier. She said: "Even my family have said, 'we've got the old Brenda back'."

GLAD was not able to contribute to the hearing because it failed to reply to tribunal papers in time. It lost an appeal against this ruling. It also lost an appeal against Ms Ellis's victory.

DN was unable to print GLAD's response to Ms Ellis's victory for legal reasons.

Lifeline disconnected

A disabled man claims a mobile phone company's policies could have cost him his life.

John Brice, who is at risk of a second stroke following one he had in 1998, said T-Mobile risked his life by cutting off the pay-as-you-go mobile phone he kept mainly for emergency calls.

Mr Brice, from Brixham Heights, Devon, became ill in early 2005 and did not use his mobile while he recovered at home. When he tried to use the phone in February this year, it had been cut off.

He rang T-Mobile and was told that after 180 days without being used, phones are put into "hibernation" – so the user can only call customer services and emergency services – before being cut off and the credit removed 90 days later.

Mr Brice, who lost the £20 credit on his old phone, said he was "absolutely disgusted" with the policy.

He said: "It worries me, because I know so many disabled people who keep a mobile

for emergency purposes."

He accused the company of ignoring his emails and a letter of complaint.

T-Mobile denied receiving the emails, but claimed it responded to Mr Brice's letter and offered to re-credit the £20.

A spokeswoman added that if Mr Brice had let the company know of his condition, their disability team could have warned him when his phone was about to be cut off.



Boy's best friend: Yogi, a chocolate Labrador, helps Daniel George open a door at home in Tyne and Wear. The pair were chosen by Radio 2 listeners to receive the Kennel Club's Friends for Life award, presented before the Crufts dog show in Birmingham. Yogi assists Daniel, 12, with tasks such as getting ready for bed.



Woman sues Royal Mail

A disabled woman is suing Royal Mail after her local post office installed a counter that is inaccessible to wheelchair users.

Elizabeth Dixon, from Stratford Upon Avon, Warwickshire, filed a case with the county court last month after being advised by a Disability Rights Commission (DRC) caseworker that she had been discriminated against.

Miss Dixon said a refurbishment last autumn left her struggling to reach over the higher

counter and required a staff member to step around the counter for the transaction. She is suing for £500 for injury to her feelings plus the £50 court fee.

A Royal Mail spokeswoman said adequate adjustments had been made because staff were "happy to accommodate her needs" by coming to the other side of the counter and adding a new lower shelf.

She said Miss Dixon was the only disabled customer who has complained.

Tories to talk disability

The Conservative Party is to hold "brainstorming" sessions with campaigners to help it form its new disability policies.

David Cameron, the new party leader, will attend the first session on 23 May, which will discuss health and social care. Four other sessions will address benefit reform, housing, education and transport.

Jeremy Hunt MP, shadow minister for disabled people, said: "David Cameron wants disability at the heart of our new policy renewal process. We can only make that happen if the voices of disabled groups are heard loud and clear right from the start."

* For an invite, tel: 020 7219 6813 or email huntj@parliament.uk

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The funding crisis affecting disabled people and their organisations is deepening. Priya Kotecha reports

£1.8billion gap in care funding

A serious lack of government funding has led to a shortfall of nearly £1.8billion in social care budgets, according to a new report.

Last month's report* from the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), the Local Government Association and two other bodies, showed a £1.77billion gap between what local authorities have to spend in 2006/2007 and what it will cost to deliver services.

The report blamed the NHS financial crisis, an increase in the number of people who need care and the rising cost of contracts.

It also found four fifths of councils are tightening eligibility criteria for disabled people. And seven out of ten adults will only receive support if their needs are critical, a ten per cent increase.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of the charity Disability Alliance, said: "We are concerned that local authorities will look to put their charges up in a bid to try and source some of that gap."

She said disabled people would be put in a precarious position as they "can't do without the services and at the same time are in a weaker financial position".

The Department of Health said it would consult its new working group, which includes ADSS and voluntary sector organisations, to "evaluate a range of issues, including funding", as it prepared for the government's overall spending review in 2007.

*For a copy of the Joint Budget Survey, tel: 020 7072 7433 or visit www.adss.org.uk

Protest victory

Disabled campaigners in Northamptonshire were "ecstatic" after their legal action managed to halt council proposals to shut organisations providing services to disabled and older people.

The group of 13 voluntary organisations, including services for people with learning difficulties, took Northamptonshire County Council to the High Court last month (right), to request a judicial review of the council's proposed budget.

But the council's admission that its plans to close services had not been approved, prevented the judge from ordering a review.

Instead, Justice Beatson ordered the council to consult organisations involved and carry out full individual assessments before making any major changes.

Yvonne Hossack, solicitor for the campaigners, said she was



"happy with the result" and wanted other disabled people to use their legal rights. "Such decisions are dangerous decisions and really they shouldn't be in the hands of people who don't know what they're doing."

The injunctions prevented the council setting its budget, closing a respite service and taking steps to progress its plans. They were lifted after the ruling last month.

The council said a consultation process had been in

place since December.

Jim Harker, the council's Conservative leader, said: "The judge concluded that the county council had plans in place to consult effectively with all those affected, which we can now proceed to."

Meanwhile, campaigners from Central England People First and other voluntary groups applied for a new injunction to stop the council setting stricter eligibility criteria for care services.

Jobs at risk after new funding cuts

One of the country's leading organisations of disabled people has issued staff with redundancy notices, following a funding crisis.

In February, the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) said it did not have adequate funds to meet its current level of operating costs

beyond last month, when its Department of Health (DH) Development Fund grant was due to end.

The not-for-profit organisation was one of several awaiting news of future funding from the DH, as *DN* went to press.

NCIL would not reveal the number of staff issued with a

redundancy notice, but said urgent short-term funding was required for all its services.

A DH spokeswoman said: "We are aware of their position and are committed to working with them to try to resolve the issues."

Meanwhile, the British Council of Disabled People said

it could no longer participate in government consultations, as a result of having to cut staff after losing DH funding last year.

One member of staff was made redundant and another had five hours a week cut, last September.

Anne Pridmore, BCODP chair, said: "The loss of our

funding means that everyone in the organisation who is being paid is putting in more hours than they're being paid for."

The DH said the grant scheme was "oversubscribed and on this occasion other candidates submitted applications that more effectively met our criteria".

Hunt demands funding review

The Conservatives' shadow minister for disabled people has demanded a review into proposed funding cuts faced by a disability charity in his Surrey constituency.

At a meeting last month, Jeremy Hunt learned that the Disabled Citizens Advice and Support Service (DisCASS) – a charity supporting independent living – needed to cut services.

DisCASS said it could not secure funding from Surrey County Council or other local authorities.

Mr Hunt said: "DisCASS provides a valuable community service for people with disabilities, so it would be a great loss if their services had to be cut. I am trying to contact those responsible to request an urgent review."

The council said it had "a set pot of money" and was "consistently receiving more applications than we can fund".

He could not say whether it was reviewing the decision.

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High achiever: The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) projected the question "Freak or Hero?" onto Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square last month. The focus on Britain's greatest disabled hero was part of the DRC's "Are we Taking the Dis?" campaign, which aims to highlight discrimination.

New faces on committee

The government has appointed six new people to its Disability Employment Advisory Committee, which advises on the employment barriers faced by disabled people.

The six new members are: Tim Cooper, managing director of Shaw Trust's work and independence division; Cheryl Cullen, employment training skills manager for the Royal National Institute for Deaf People; Catherine

Graham, chair of the Scottish Union for Supported Employment; Asif Iqbal, project manager for Parentline Plus; Christine Jess, strategy manager for Equal Access to Employment in Glasgow; and Dr Rachel Perkins, of St George's Mental Health NHS Trust in London.

Five of the new members are disabled. They join eight members of the committee who have been reappointed.

Funding ends for 'vital' aids

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Campaigners have warned that thousands of disabled children might be left without vital communication aids, following the end of a government funding scheme last month.

The Communication Aids Project (CAP), set up by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), has provided £20 million of equipment and training to over 4,000 school-age children since 2002.

As part of its Speak for Yourself campaign, the disability charity Scope has called for ring-fenced national funding to ensure all disabled people have access to communication aids and support.

Roger Berry has tabled early day motion 1,325 around the campaign, which has almost 120 signatures from fellow MPs.

Jenny Herd, a founding

member of campaigning group Speak Out Loud, whose son uses a communication aid, said she was concerned that disabled people in need of costly communication aids would be at the mercy of patchy local funding.

Kate Caryer, a *DN* columnist and communication aid user, told a meeting of the all party parliamentary disability group: "If I had not been able to afford to buy my own communication aid and the proper support, I would be without a voice. I would not be studying for a degree, and I would certainly not be talking to you now."

A DfES spokesman said: "We have always made clear that the CAP was a supplement to existing provision made locally. We are keen to maintain the momentum generated by CAP and we are actively exploring options for doing this."

Activist faces deportation

A disabled activist who fled to the UK from Kenya after receiving death threats, could still be deported by authorities despite a last minute reprieve.

Peter Gitau Gichura (*pictured*) was detained at Harmondsworth Detention Centre for a week, as immigration authorities prepared to deport him on 23 February. But the deportation was delayed as his lawyer filed a fresh application for asylum.

Mr Gichura, a wheelchair user, hit out at the treatment he received at the centre, calling it "racist and heartless".

He said the healthcare was "appalling" and claimed he was given someone else's medication to treat his bladder problems.

He has now moved back to his flat in Croydon, but must visit the Home Office (HO)



every Friday while it processes his latest asylum application.

Mr Gichura fled to the UK in June 2001 after he allegedly received death threats from Kenyan government officials, when the disability organisation he helped set up tried to secure land for community projects.

The HO said it could not comment on individual cases, but added that "due care and attention is always given to the health and welfare of all detainees."

In brief

Court blow for parents

A High Court judge ruled that Charlotte Wyatt, a severely disabled two-year-old from Portsmouth, does not have to be kept alive by ventilation if her condition deteriorates and doctors believe it is not in her best interests.

The court order counters the wishes of Charlotte's parents, who believe that every possible measure should be taken to keep her alive.

Ruling keeps boy alive

The family of a disabled 19-month-old boy won a High Court case to keep their son, who has spinal muscular atrophy, alive on a ventilator.

The judgement does give doctors the right to withhold treatment if the boy has heart failure or develops certain infections.

MS specialist shortage

A new report warned that a shortage of multiple sclerosis (MS) specialists in the UK could stop NHS Trusts from meeting service targets for patients with MS.

The report, written by the group Therapists in MS, backed by the MS Trust, calls for higher numbers of specialists and more research into how to improve services and cut long-term costs.

Oxygen death probe

North Cumbria Primary Care Trust launched an investigation following the death of Alice Broderick, who died after waiting several hours for an oxygen delivery in February.

The delivery service was one of four companies contracted by the Department of Health (DH) last year.

The DH admitted some areas were experiencing difficulties with the service but said suppliers had "taken steps to remedy the situation".

Unfair care charges

A BBC Panorama documentary claimed health authorities were unfairly charging thousands of disabled and ill people for long-term care in nursing homes.

The programme claimed that a legal test case, which set guidelines for when the NHS should pay for care, was often disregarded.

The programme said thousands of families were being forced to sell their homes, and were often not told of their right to free care.

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Woman dies after council care failure

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

A council has been criticised for events that lead to a disabled woman dying, after she lay undiscovered for hours on her floor because a care worker failed to turn up for a daily visit.

Following an investigation, the local government ombudsman found that Blackpool Borough Council failed to act after receiving several complaints about the company that employed the care worker, even before the incident that led to the woman's death.

On 30 March 2003, Edna King, a 79-year-old full-time

wheelchair user who needed two daily home care visits, was found collapsed on the floor of her home after a care worker from a private homecare provider failed to turn up for two scheduled visits.

Miss King sustained a stroke, a heart attack and hypothermia while lying on the floor. She was taken to hospital but died eight days later.

The local government ombudsman, Anne Seex, said: "In this case, the council failed to do all it could to provide a safe and reliable service. It failed to understand that it was dealing with a provider that

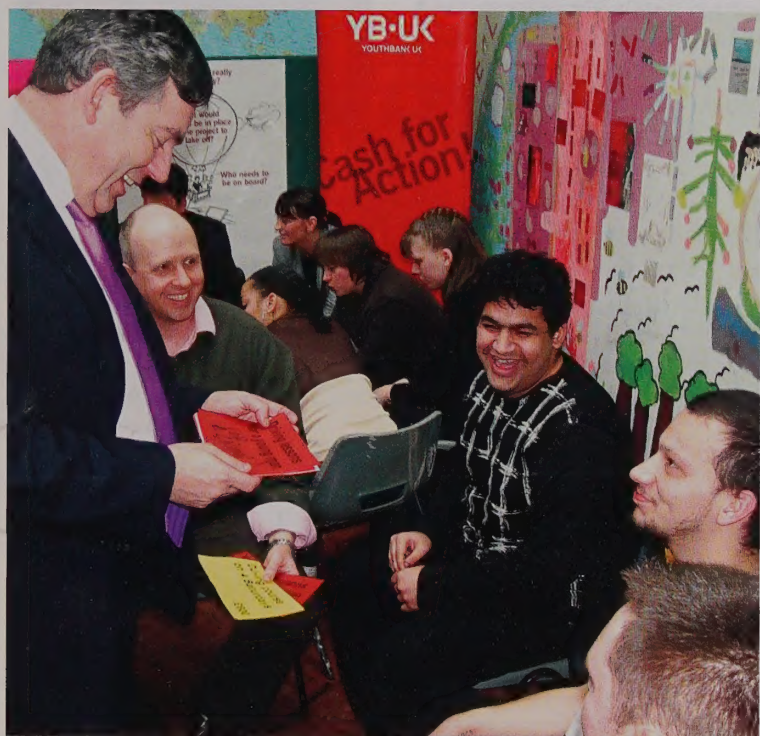
was acting dangerously towards some service users."

She recommended the council review its care plans, waive an outstanding £849 home care charge and pay £500 compensation to Miss King's niece, who brought the complaint.

The council accepted responsibility for its part in the incident and said it had already implemented many of the recommendations.

It has also terminated its contract with the home care company.

**Some names have been changed*



Start the bidding: Gordon Brown meets Martin Doyle (right) and Faisal Yusuf during last month's visit to Hammersmith and Fulham Action on Disability. The Chancellor launched two funds that will let young people bid for cash from their local councils to improve facilities and activities.

Minimum wage not enough for good care

The government has announced increases in grants paid to help severely disabled people live independently, but campaigners say the payments are still not high enough to hire skilled personal assistants.

From this month, the maximum sum payable through the Independent Living Fund (1993) Fund will rise from £420 per week to £455 per week, an increase of £1,820 a year.

The maximum grant from the Independent Living Fund (Extension) Fund will rise from £715 per week to £785 per week, a rise of £3,640 a year.

But Simone Aspis, a spokeswoman for the British Council of Disabled People, said: "The increase means that

disabled people who have 24-7 personal assistance will still only be able to pay their personal assistants just above the minimum hourly rate. This is clearly insufficient for disabled people who want to employ highly skilled and sensitive staff on a long-term basis."

The increases were recommended by the funds' trustees and approved by Anne McGuire, the minister for disabled people.

The 1993 fund is open to new applicants, while the Extension fund closed to new applicants in 1993.

The Independent Living Funds (ILF) help nearly 18,000 disabled people with high support needs who want to live independently.

Report uncovers discrimination

A major report measuring the inequalities experienced by disabled people in the UK was launched by two disability charities last month.

Disablist Britain*, written by the think-tank Demos, documents discrimination against disabled people in education, employment, housing, transport, leisure and social status.

The report's findings show that 47 per cent of disabled people of working age are unemployed, 350,000 do not have the adapted housing they need and 41 per cent have difficulty when travelling.

Commissioned by the disability charity Scope and Disability Awareness in Action, it was welcomed by policy-makers and campaigners at the second Disablism Summit, hosted by Scope as part of its Time To Get Equal campaign.

Following his keynote speech at the summit, John Hutton, work and pensions secretary, was pressed on disabled people's concerns around Incapacity Benefit reform and how the government was going to help end disablism.

He said the government was committed to a "Britain without disablism" and that the issues raised, such as the IB assessment process, would be carefully examined.

Tara Flood, head of policy and politics at Scope, said disabled people were often excluded from research and policy makers and research organisations should include them from the beginning.

**For a free copy, tel: 020 7619 7261 or visit www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/disablistbritain*

Call for more teen support

Older disabled teenagers need more support during their transition into adulthood, campaigners told a London conference last month.

The Family Fund (FF), a charity that helps families with disabled children up to the age of 15, called on the government to extend funding so it could help disabled young people up to the age of 25.

FF gives grants to disabled children and their families to enjoy leisure activities and provide practical items for daily life.

Marion Lowe, FF chief executive, said the government must meet the needs of disabled young people or "we will see increasing breakdown of families who are already under enormous strain".



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Disabled students' conference

The National Union of Students' Disabled Students conference, held in Blackpool in February, discussed language, postgraduate funding and apathy. Elizabeth Choppin reports

Student image updated

The National Union of Students (NUS) disability campaign has changed its name from "students with disabilities" to "disabled students" (DS) in a move to update its image.

Disabled students voted for the name swap at the group's annual conference in Blackpool, where they also agreed to stop using the term "able-bodied" to describe non-disabled people.

During the heated debate, delegate Pam Duncan of Telford College in Edinburgh said the tag "students with disabilities" was not in line with the social model



Debate: Student Pam Duncan fought to change the campaign's name

of disability and meant the campaign was contradicting its own goals.

She added: "We have impairments, not disabilities. Society owns the disabilities, not us."

Current SWD national officer, Sian Davies, said the change would help change perceptions of disabled people.

She said: "I am a disabled student, not a student with disabilities. It's time to be proud of who we are. It (the name change) is a political statement."

The issue was hotly debated, with several rounds of speeches.

Phillip Garr, of the University of Bath, said it had been "hard enough" to gain support in his community without adding the confusion of a new name.

Flawed funding

It is "outrageous" that disabled postgraduates receive only half the funding they received as undergraduates, student campaigners told the conference.

The NUS DS is to campaign for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to be assessed on need and cost.

As it stands, the highest rate of DSA is only available to full-time disabled undergraduates and drops 50 per cent for undergraduates.

Jenny Mathison, of the NUS DS committee, said: "There are disabled students in undergraduate courses who have complex needs with several hours of care needed a day – and then they go on to postgrad courses and have to drop out because funding is not available to them."

Pam Duncan, of Telford College in Edinburgh, added: "We have needs whether we're in further or higher education or postgraduate courses. They do not change."

Students must fight for their rights

Disabled students should curb their apathy and "care about their rights", declared the national representative for NUS DS moments after he was voted in at the conference.

Alex Kemp (pictured), a student social worker at the University of Manchester, said he would devote his time in office to campaigning for better access on campuses and lobbying government

for vital changes on legislation affecting disabled students.

The conference voted to push MPs to sign Early Day motion 1575, which calls for a revised mental health bill.

Mr Kemp said: "I am concerned about the low level of consultation of disabled people in the making of the legislation about us."



ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

'Schools must close'

Inclusion campaigners have told a Commons inquiry why special schools need to be closed down.

Richard Reiser, of Disability Equality in Education, told the education and skills committee's inquiry into special educational needs (SEN) that inclusion was not working in some local authorities because of the "postcode lottery" in provision.



When committee member Nadine Dorries, Conservative MP for Mid Bedfordshire, insisted there was "no way" children with certain needs could "survive" in mainstream settings, Mr Reiser said: "It's not about the type of impairment, it's about the ethos and attitude in the school."

He cited the London borough of Newham (pictured) as an example of good practice, where disabled pupils, including some children with autism, are 24 times less likely to be segregated than disabled pupils in South Tyneside.

Micheline Mason, of the 20/20 campaign, which aims for the closure of all special schools, rejected the idea that inclusion can exist within special schools.

She added: "However good the special school is, what it can never do is rebuild the relationship between disabled people and non-disabled people."

Meanwhile, the government's insistence in its new education bill that its admissions code for schools will be voluntary has raised concerns that disabled children could be excluded from the best schools.

A spokeswoman for the National Autistic Society said: "So long as schools can reject children with autism, we will not address the long tail of under-achievement that exists."

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Flawed system denies benefits

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Thousands of disabled people are being denied disability-related benefits because of serious flaws in the system, according to a new report.

The Citizens Advice (CA) report* says the medical assessments process that decides if a person is entitled to a benefit is "deeply flawed" and needs major improvement if the government's plans for welfare reform were to succeed.

CA's figures – obtained from government statistics from June 2005 – shows six out of ten decisions to withdraw or reject a benefit claim are

overturned on appeal.

The report blames the quality of medical assessments and decision-making by staff from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Problems include doctors wrongly reporting what claimants have told them or underestimating the severity of their impairment.

Disability charity RADAR called for better training for professionals involved in assessments and improved guidance for disabled people making claims.

Kate Nash, RADAR's chief executive, said: "A lot of medical professionals simply

do not understand how disability affects people in the real world, yet the system places its reliance in the doctor and the medical diagnosis."

But a DWP spokeswoman said the figures quoted by CA did not present an accurate picture. Of all IB claims, only eight per cent go to appeal, she said.

"We have to understand that the figure quoted by CA refers only to six out of 10 overturned decisions where appeals are made. A vast number of decisions don't get around to appeal at all."

**What the Doctor Ordered?* Tel: 020 7833 2181 or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk



Challenging perceptions: A poster campaign has raised awareness of the challenges faced by children with disfigurements. London Underground (LU) donated 280 spaces over a fortnight for the campaign by charity Changing Faces (CF). Pictured from left are CF's Winnie Couthino, Honey and mum Emely, who feature in the campaign, and LU's Richard Parry.

Adult education 'lacking expertise'

A new report criticising the standard of education for disabled adults in the UK has delivered a "wake-up call" to the adult learning sector.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate's (ALI) report* found provision for disabled adults was costly, lacked expertise and did not provide solid training to enter the workforce.

It said expectations must be raised in further education colleges if disabled adults were to achieve their potential and "play a bigger role in the economy".

David Sherlock, ALI chief inspector, said: "Nobody can reasonably set an arbitrary limit

on what another person might achieve. There is a wealth of energy and talent, which is still denied its fulfilment."

ALI called for better-trained staff, speech and language therapies, specialist technology and apprenticeship programmes.

Melanie Hunt, the national director of learning for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), said the report would be used as a resource to improve quality and to "identify ways forward".

* *Greater Expectations: provision for learners with disabilities. For a copy, tel: 0115 901 3339, or visit www.ali.gov.uk*

Help denied at pump again

A disabled driver has had a second "appalling" experience while trying to fill up her car with petrol.

Sandy Eifion-Jones won a pledge from Esso to improve staff training, after a cashier refused to help her fill up with fuel (DN, February, page 7).

But she says she received even worse service at the Texaco filling station in Hampton Hill, Surrey, in late February.

Her teenage daughter asked the attendant for help to fill up the car for her mum, a wheelchair user.

A member of the public came out to help, but was waved back into the shop by the staff member, who then tried to force Mrs Eifion-Jones's daughter, who is too young to drive, into filling up the car herself.

Mrs Eifion-Jones left the petrol station, which is supplied by Texaco but owned and run by another company, Petrol Express (PE), without any fuel.

She had to send her PA out the next day to buy a can of petrol.

A Texaco spokesman said the situation was "not ideal" and PE had apologised for not being able to help.

He said PE claimed the staff member could not fill the car himself due to "safety issues with the area around the forecourt at Hampton Hill at night" and said Mrs Eifion-Jones was "welcome during the daytime".

She said: "It was absolutely appalling. I am reluctant to drive now as I am continually refused service. A disabled driver should not have to get petrol at a specific time of day."

Work schemes get funding

More than 5,000 disabled people in London are poised to find work or gain training following the launch of a London Development Agency funding scheme.

Out of 94 projects to be funded by the new Opportunities Fund, 12 disability-related schemes were chosen. They will share £6.75million over the next three years.

Disability organisations to win grants from the fund, set up to overcome employment and training barriers, include the National Autistic Society, Shape and the Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

Mayor Ken Livingstone said: "This fund will harness the tremendous ability, enthusiasm, creativity and ingenuity of groups throughout the capital."

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Deafblind services a postcode lottery

BY JOHN PRING

Improvements in services for deafblind people in England and Wales have "reached a plateau", according to a new survey*.

The deafblind charity Sense said its survey had found no improvement since 2004 in the number of deafblind people receiving a communicator guide

service or the number of councils providing this one-to-one communication support.

More than one in ten councils have failed to identify any deafblind people in their area.

The survey was published five years after the government issued guidance for local authorities on providing social care for deafblind people.

Pictured are Keith Hill (left), Labour MP for Streatham, with one of his deafblind constituents, Daniel Patrick (right) and Steve Rose, who helps Mr Patrick communicate, at a parliamentary reception held last month to launch the survey.

* Deafblind guidance: five years on, tel: 02075 61 34 13 or visit www.sense.org.uk



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Activists on board

Leading disability rights activists have been appointed to a new advisory group that will help the government set up a national forum for disabled people.

The forum should improve communication between disabled people's organisations and the government. Its creation was a key recommendation of the government's *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report.

Alun Davies, co-chair of the advisory group, said: "The government's commitment to involving and consulting with disabled people is a very important message for disabled people to hear."

The other members of the group, who are all disabled, are: Haqeeq Bostan, Jim Elder-Woodward, Rachel Hurst, Paul Gemmill, Kirsten Hearn, Rowen Jade, Andrew Lee, Reg McLaughlin, Penny Melville-Brown, Diane Mulligan and Richard Reiser.

The Department for Work and Pensions said the forum should be set up by the end of 2006.

Survey checks on fire service

A national survey will aim to discover how the fire and rescue service is treating firefighters with diabetes.

The survey of firefighters and control staff by Diabetes UK is part of a project to find out how policies have changed since the Disability Discrimination Act was extended to cover the emergency services in October 2004.

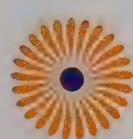
The charity will also launch a survey of employers, with a report to follow.

Simon O'Neill, Diabetes UK's director of care and policy, said: "We know that there is no reason why officers with well controlled diabetes should not be able to carry out their duties."

• For a survey form, tel: 020 7424 1161 or visit www.diabetes.org.uk

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Take a different road



Breast screening access limited

A disabled woman prevented from having regular check-ups for breast cancer because of her impairment has called for the development of accessible screening equipment.

Mary Laver (*pictured*), 59, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, has been unable to have a mammogram on two occasions because she cannot turn her head.



Radiographers at Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary offered her an MRI scan instead, but that was also inaccessible.

Mrs Laver, who has rheumatoid arthritis, said: "There is

never going to be an option available unless someone shouts. They have to put pressure on the manufacturers to design a machine. I am very angry about it, because nobody is trying to solve the problem."

A Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust spokeswoman said: "It is a very, very small minority who are unable to have breast screening. We do take responsibility for disabled people very seriously."

But she added: "There is no alternative equipment. The equipment we use is used in every hospital in the country."

A Department of Health (DH) spokeswoman said it was "a very difficult situation" and "every effort should be made to screen if possible".

She said doctors should "explore all alternatives", but declined to comment when asked if the DH should try to secure accessible equipment for breast screening.

Heart transplant success

BY PRIYA KOTECHEA

A three-year-old girl has become only the second person with Down's syndrome to have a heart transplant in the UK.

Hannah Carty (*pictured*) has made a "remarkable" recovery from the life-saving operation carried out by doctors at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital in February.

The operation has reignited the debate on why many people with Down's syndrome, nearly 50 per cent of whom have a heart condition, are overlooked for assessment when a donated heart becomes available.

The Down's Heart Group (DHG), which supported Hannah and her family, said her story gave hope to other parents whose children are overlooked for transplants.

Penny Green, director of DHG, said: "No one should ever be denied the chance of life simply because they may have other needs."



EVENING CHRONICLE NEWCASTLE

Stephen Carty, Hannah's dad, said: "She's doing really well and she's getting stronger every day. We're so relieved."

He added that the decision to go ahead with the operation was "nerve-racking", as the chances of Hannah's body rejecting the new heart were high.

Before the surgery, Hannah was being kept alive by a plastic heart. Her own heart failed in July last year after eight months

of chemotherapy to treat the leukaemia she was diagnosed with at the age of two.

Julie Flett, heart transplant liaison sister at the Freeman Hospital, told *DN*: "Parents who have a child with Down's syndrome may be worried that their child will be discriminated against when a heart becomes available. Hannah's case proves that that's not the case [in the UK]."

Investigation into blocked treatment is 'restricted'

A severely disabled woman who claims a primary care trust is blocking her treatment has criticised the investigation into her case.

The Health Service Ombudsman for England is investigating Gillian McCarthy's claims (*DN*,

February) that South Somerset Primary Care Trust is refusing to treat her multiple chemical sensitivity and other serious conditions.

But Ms McCarthy, who has been living in an unheated wooden hut in a Somerset field for nine years while she waits

for her council to build her a safe, chemical-free home, says she has not been able to submit vital evidence.

She claims the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS), the Department of Health-commissioned service that is providing support

for her complaint, has failed to help her submit this evidence.

She fears the ombudsman is carrying out a restricted investigation that will not cover allegations that the trust has blocked her treatment over much of

the last seven years.

A spokesman for the ICAS service in the south-west, which is run by the charity Citizens Advice, said it had "given Gillian the best advice and assistance we can so far and the matter is now with the ombudsman".

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Online spinal treatments

A website* is drawing together treatments from around the world that could help people with spinal cord injuries.

The website was launched by health authorities in Iceland and the World Health Organisation, with support from the Council of Europe.

It was the brainchild of Icelandic mum Audur Gudjonsdottir, whose daughter Hrafnhildur was paralysed in an accident. A Chinese surgeon performed a neural graft on Hrafnhildur, and with the help of intensive physiotherapy she can now stand on her own and walk with aids.

The treatments on the website range from laser acupuncture to stem cell transplantation, hyperbaric oxygen and nutritional therapy.

* www.sci-therapies.info

**To contribute, email: Laurance@sci.com

Twenty disabled athletes represented Great Britain in the ice sledge hockey, wheelchair curling and alpine skiing events at the Winter Paralympic Games in Turin, Italy, in March. Priya Kotecha rounds up the first six days of action

Hockey defeat | Skiers give it everything



Great Britain's sledge hockey team were fighting to avoid the wooden spoon at the Winter Paralympic Games in Turin, following a crushing 3-0 defeat against Sweden on day five of the Games.

Despite putting in their best performance of the games so far, the team were unable to score in the play-off for fifth place, despite heavy pressure.

Defender Nathan Stephens (*pictured against Canada*) told *DN* the team was "very disappointed".

He said: "We played so well against Sweden and had lots of chances, but we just couldn't get the puck in the back of the net. There's a lot that can be improved on. We've made some fundamental errors."

But he added that the team would pick themselves up for the seventh place play-off.

"We should be fine, we have a day off so we'll talk through what's happened and then focus on the game in hand."

Team GB secured just one victory in the group stages, a hard fought 2-1 win against Italy in their final match.

A goal from Ian Warner after 15 minutes of play got the team off to a great start, but Italy came back to equalise through Gianluca Cavaliere within ten minutes.

But GB didn't give up. Forward Karl Nicholson scored less than three minutes later to take Britain into the lead again.

It was their first win of the competition, following heavy defeats against Canada (0-9) and Norway (0-6) in their first two group matches.

Britain were due to play Italy in the seventh place play-off on day seven of the competition.

British alpine skier Sean Rose missed out on a medal by half a second in the men's downhill (sitting) ski event, on day two of the Winter Paralympics in Turin.

The 34-year-old from Northampton was just over 0.5 seconds outside the bronze medal position, recording a time of 1minute 22.71 seconds in the first sit-ski event of the games, which was won by American Kevin Bramble.

Fellow Briton Russell Docker failed to match Rose's form, crashing out of the 2.325 kilometre course.

Rose – who won overall gold in the 2005 World Disabled Water Skiing Championships – and Docker were both way

below par in the men's super-G (sitting) event, two days later, coming 22nd and 23rd respectively on the 2.12 course.

Liz Miller – the only British female in the alpine skiing events – came tenth in the downhill (standing) ski event on day one, recording a time of

1minute 40.19 seconds. But the 26-year-old from Brockenhurst came last in the women's super-G (standing) event on day four.

In the women's giant slalom event on day six, Miller came 14th in both runs, recording times of 1minute 12.5 seconds and 2minutes 13.5 seconds respectively.



So close: Sean Rose missed out on a medal by half a second

Curlers make semi finals

Britain's wheelchair curling team secured a semi-final place at the Paralympic Games in Turin, with a hard-fought victory against the US in their final match of the group stages.

The all-Scottish team including skip Frank Duffy, Angie Malone, Tom Killin, Michael McCreadie and Ken Dickson, had to secure a win to progress to the latter stages, following a mixed run of performances in the earlier group matches.

The 5-2 win came courtesy

of strong performances from Tom Killin and Angie Malone.

GB finished joint second with Sweden, Denmark and Norway in the round robin phase.

Canada, Britain and Sweden qualified automatically, but Norway played and won a tie breaker against Denmark to take the last semi-final spot.

Lead Angie Malone, who takes the first two stones of a match, said she was thrilled that the team had achieved their aim of qualifying.

She said: "I think we've got a lot more in us, we're saving our best to the last."

In the other group stage matches, England lost three against Switzerland (3-4), Norway (6-7) and Canada (6-7).

But the two-time World Champions (as Scotland) recorded victories against Denmark (5-3), Sweden (7-2) and Italy (8-5) before a final flourish against the US.

Wheelchair curling made its debut at the games this year.

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Disabled shoppers question

The new chip and PIN payment system has gone live across the UK, but many disabled people are frustrated that their access requests are being ignored. Elizabeth Choppin talks to disabled people struggling to spend their own money

Susan Drew never used to have trouble spending her money. Until the dawn of chip and PIN, she would simply sign a sales receipt and be on her way.

But as the UK prepared for 14 February and the switch to chip and PIN – where credit and debit card purchases require the shopper to key a four-digit PIN number into a keypad – Susan was often reduced to tears as shop assistants refused to accept that she could not use a keypad because of her impairment.

Susan, who has Parkinson's disease and lives in Gloucestershire, is unable to use chip and PIN because of a hand tremor. At one point she "went to pieces", and even attempted suicide, because she faced daily battles when trying to pay for goods and services – the stress of which made her tremors worse.

Many disability groups and individuals have voiced concern that the new payment method could risk excluding many other disabled people like Susan.

Those with certain impairments are more likely to face problems than others, and while only a few weeks have

passed since the changeover day, 14 February, it is already clear that a lack of staff awareness of alternatives to chip and PIN is likely to prove the biggest barrier.

Banks can provide a chip and signature card for those who are unable to remember their PIN or punch it into a keypad, but many disabled people are not aware of the chip and signature option, and if they are, an alarming number of retailers

'Why should I have to apologise and explain why I cannot use a machine?'

and shop assistants do not know about it and are refusing to accept it.

Susan has a chip and signature card but feels her quality of life has diminished because retailers in her hometown of Gloucester still insist she must key a PIN into a machine, which she blames on a lack of training.

"The banks are not communicating and the shop assistants are being overzealous, following their chip and PIN training."

Even though the card issuing authority, APACS, insists it did everything it could to raise awareness with banks and retailers before the switch, Susan says she is still encountering the same problems.

On a recent visit to a shop, she had to hold up the queue to explain to the sales assistant that she could not use the keypad because of her condition, which is why she has the alternative card. Finally, a manager was called over and made an exception, "this one time".

Susan says: "They were making me terribly embarrassed in front of other customers. Why should I have to apologise and explain I cannot use the machine? I requested a card that would facilitate for my abilities and I am still getting turned away or questioned."

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) included Susan in its campaign, "Are we taking the Dis?" (DN, March), which highlights examples of discrimination.

The DRC has warned that retailers and banks which do not make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, such as accepting chip and signature cards or adapting PIN machines, could be breaching the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and may face court action.

Helen Dearman, campaigns officer for the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), says that, despite protocols being in place to accommodate disabled customers unable to use chip and PIN, "information is a bit dodgy at a local level". But she adds: "By and large, it is about training and awareness. As staff get more used to dealing with chip and PIN, the problems will start to disappear."

Peter Nicholson, a blind wheelchair user from Preston, says the chip and signature card will make the majority of transactions easier, provided the sales assistant knows it exists. But as it does not work in cash machines, he will need to carry a standard chip and PIN card as well.

Disability charity Capability Scotland has started an online survey of disabled people who are having difficulty with chip and PIN.

A spokeswoman says: "We are concerned that the onus is on disabled people to contact



Insecure payment: Emma Reeves and her partner discover just how easy it is to view a stranger's PIN number

their banks for alternative chip and PIN services, when it should be the other way around.

"We are also concerned that information on how to use chip and PIN and its alternatives are not always available in accessible formats so all

disabled people can understand what is happening."

Wheelchair user Emma Reeves, who runs a disability website*, is alarmed that chip and signature cards do not offer the same amount of security intended by the use of chip and PIN cards.

She said: "APACS have introduced chip and PIN to help combat face-to-face card fraud, but if you are using a chip and signature card then where is the extra fraud protection? Why have they not placed photos on the back of these cards to protect this section of their customer base?"

A spokeswoman for Mencap, the charity for people with learning difficulties – one of the main groups of disabled people who have raised concerns about the chip and PIN switch – says it is too soon to say how the new regulations are working.

She says: "However, chip and PIN can be more accessible than having to sign a receipt. We hope the regulators will continue to see the need for a signature in some cases, and allow both existing and new customers with a learning disability to choose whichever option works best for them."

Youssef Abidat, from



Declined: Susan Drew (above) cannot use a keypad while Youssef Abidat (below) welcomes the new system



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new chip and PIN system

Finchley, London, who has a learning difficulty, says he welcomes the switch because he feels his money will be more secure with chip and PIN.

"If you drop your card, there is a one in a million chance someone is going to know your number. If you have got a signature, that is it, you are in big trouble."

'Information is a bit dodgy at a local level'

Mr Abidat points out that not all people with learning difficulties have problems remembering a PIN.

He adds: "The only drawback is for someone in a home with a support worker who has to know your PIN. You can trust them too much. Also, when you are in a line at a supermarket, someone could be behind you memorising your number."

A spokesman for chip and PIN, part of APACS, denies that more should have been done to raise awareness of the issues facing disabled people.

He says the switch was advertised in the trade press for retailers and outlined in committee meetings with representatives from the banking and retail industries.

He insists that "we have done as much as we can" to help the transition go smoothly for disabled customers.

He also denies it is passing the buck to say that the problems are "ultimately a customer services issue", with retailers responsible for properly training staff.

"With 1.5 million retail staff in the UK, sometimes they will not have the correct information," he says. "Our job has been to minimise that as much as possible."

APACS cannot penalise businesses for repeat offences, he says.

APACS believes the threat of a DDA case will have to be incentive enough for retailers to follow the new rules and protocols.

In the meantime, it seems, disabled people will have to hope that retailers will soon iron out the kinks in the new system.

* www.poss-ability.com

Trial and error

Emma Reeves, a wheelchair user, volunteered to test how chip and PIN is working for disabled people after 14 February. She visited several shops, supermarkets and petrol stations in the Stoke-on-Trent area.

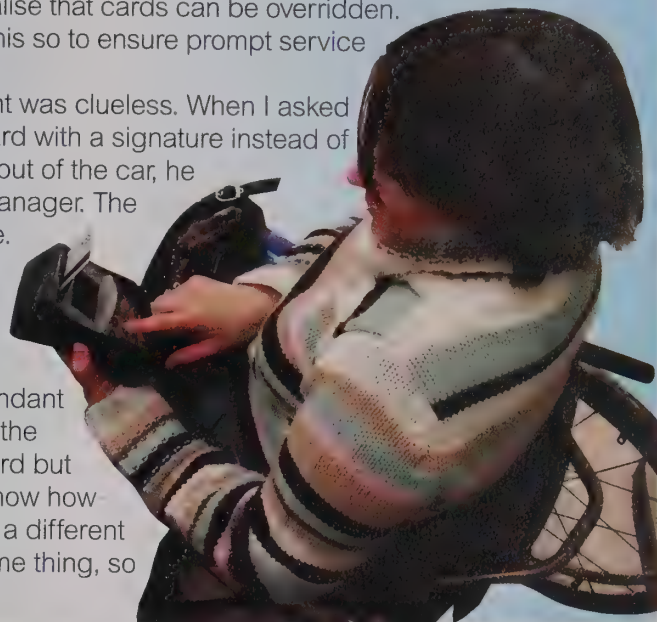
"I visited Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, WHSmith, Marks and Spencer and Woolworths. I carried out a test with my partner in the queue to check if he could see my PIN over my shoulder as I entered it. In all cases the result was yes. There is nothing obvious that can be done about this, aside from a mobile terminal and going into a privacy booth, which is a bit over-the-top.

Then I went to get fuel. I do not have the alternative chip and signature card because it does not allow me to use a cash point. If a petrol station does not have a portable chip and PIN terminal, it means that the attendant must accept a signature.

BP fared the best. The person who filled my car was aware the PIN could be overridden, but he had not done it yet so was not sure it would work. It did and the whole transaction went quickly. BP have trained their staff to realise that cards can be overridden. It may take longer for some staff to do this so to ensure prompt service a signature card would be a good idea.

Shell took a little longer. The attendant was clueless. When I asked if I could pay using my chip and PIN card with a signature instead of a PIN, since it is not easy for me to get out of the car, he said he would have to check with his manager. The process took double the amount of time. I asked if the chip and PIN card would always work with a signature, and the manager could not guarantee they would always be able to accept it.

At Sainsbury's petrol station, the attendant said she was not supposed to override the system to allow a signature on a PIN card but that she would this once. She did not know how long that option would be available or if a different attendant would be willing to do the same thing, so she suggested I get a signature card."



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Jumping through hoops for Sativex

Last November, the Home Office appeared to clear the way for thousands of disabled people to secure the cannabis drug Sativex. But it has not turned out that way...

Priya Kotecha investigates

DN CAMPAIGN

Carole Stuart was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 1991.

She has used raw cannabis on and off for the last ten years to control the pain and muscle spasms she experiences on a daily basis.

She says there is no alternative pain relief apart from Sativex, a cannabis-based oral spray.

For ten years, the 59-year-old has been desperately trying to be admitted onto a Sativex trial, but her consultant has refused to put her name forward, without giving her a proper explanation.

So when the Home Office (HO) announced last November that Sativex could now be imported on a named patient basis for those with MS, Carole hoped she would finally be able to use a form of pain relief which was legal and actually worked.

But the hope soon faded when her local health authority in Aberdeen - equivalent to one of England's primary care trusts (PCTs) - refused to approve a Sativex

prescription from her doctor.

The refusal has angered Don, Carole's husband and full-time carer, who believes Sativex could give Carole a much better life.

He said: "For a start, she will be able to control the dosage, which it is extremely difficult to do with the raw stuff."

He also slammed the government for drawing out the process by which patients could obtain the spray.

"People desperate for Sativex are being given the runaround and the whole situation regarding this medicine is nothing short of criminal."

A spokeswoman from the couple's health authority, NHS Grampian, said Sativex would need to be licensed by the MHRA and approved by the Scottish Medicines Consortium before they would recommend it for prescription.

She said: "Until such time, we would not recommend that any GP prescribe it."

Many people with MS are discovering their PCT's reluctance to approve Sativex prescriptions provides an extra hurdle to clear before they can take the drug.

The Department of Health



Contrasting fortunes: Carole Stuart (left) has been denied Sativex for ten years while Lizzie Gilchrist (right) is one of the few people to benefit from the Home Office's announcement

(DH) said the need for PCT approval applied to all unlicensed medicines in the UK. It was not a policy change specific to Sativex.

A DH spokeswoman said some PCTs could have stopped doctors from prescribing Sativex because they "did not recognise the medicine's clinical effects", because of safety concerns, or due to their inability to fund the medicine.

However, the PCT Sativex veto is limited to patients who want to secure a prescription on the NHS. Patients who visit private doctors will not face this hurdle, provided that the doctor is willing to take responsibility for administering the drug.

So far, 23 sympathetic doctors have notified the MHRA that they want to prescribe Sativex to patients with MS. Each of these notifications could include more than one patient.

But many of these disabled people have come up against yet another hurdle in their struggle to start

taking Sativex.

Of the 23 notifications to the MHRA since the HO announcement in November, 21 have now been put on hold.

Following a meeting late last year, the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), which advises the MHRA, has raised a number of new requests.

'People desperate for Sativex are being given the runaround'

These include a need for updated safety information for doctors, chemists and patients, and arrangements for reporting any adverse drug reactions.

It is far from clear why these questions were not raised before the Home Office announcement in November that it would allow the drug to be imported on a named patient basis.

The CHM and MHRA were due to consider the matter again as *DN* went to press.

But a spokesman for GW

Pharmaceuticals, which manufactures Sativex, was unable to clarify the situation.

He told *DN*: "At the start of this year, GW responded immediately and fully to a request from the MHRA for some specific data on Sativex. Since then, we have had no request from them. The first the company heard of this apparent need for more detail about advice to patients/prescribers was when we were contacted by *Disability Now*. We have been trying to clarify this matter with the MHRA over the last few days, but without success."

The HO said it would continue to issue licences for Sativex-related use, provided the licences had been approved or not objected to by the MHRA.

There have still been no applications to the MHRA to import Sativex for conditions other than MS, even though the MHRA has said it will consider such applications.

It is unclear why no-one in the UK with conditions such as arthritis or cancer pain has found a doctor willing to apply to import the drug.

But there has been some good news. Before the CHM intervention, the MHRA had approved two notifications for Sativex.

Lizzie Gilchrist, from Bucks Hill, Essex, was one of the lucky ones. Miss Gilchrist previously took raw cannabis in cakes to ease the symptoms of her MS. She said her Sativex application had been "pretty straightforward".

She said: "I am taking more of the spray to get the same effect as the raw version, but it is fantastic."

But for thousands of other disabled people, who could benefit from medicinal cannabis, the long wait for a legal form of the drug continues.

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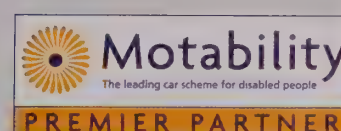
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Digital era's access bonus

Digital technology has allowed me to edit my own news stories, says disabled journalist Helen Smith

DN CAMPAIGN

Anglia Television News transmitted its first news programme using the latest digital technology on 3 December, 2005.

Going from a tape-based production system to a computer-based one has meant enormous changes for everyone working at Anglia News. But as a journalist with upper limb disabilities, these changes have dramatically increased the tasks I am able to perform.

As one of Anglia News East's Norfolk reporters, I cover a wide range of stories, anything from a murder to cats being rescued. In the past I would go out with a cameraman, film the story and return to the newsroom, where the report would be pieced together by the picture editor.

The edit machines consisted of numerous dials and several keys would have to be held down at the same time. With no hands, editing a news report was impossible.

However, with the implementation of the new digital technology, editing has now become part of my daily workload.

Digital technology means I can edit my own footage with an Avid desktop editing computer. Once finished, I can send it straight to the main server, where it can be played during the news.

There are several editing computers around the newsroom and I can use any of them. The only difference for me is I plug in a different

mouse. I use a mouse pad because I find a standard mouse difficult to use.

The keyboard layout of these editing computers is very similar to a normal desktop computer and the mousepad plugs straight in without any trouble. The other mouse remains attached so anyone else can come and alter my report while I am working on it. As we also have other offices in the Anglia region which I sometimes need to work from, I also carry a spare mousepad in my handbag.

In this day and age, TV journalists are expected to report and edit their own material, and because of digital technology, it is now possible for me to do this too.

Basically, anyone who can use a computer can edit and I hope this will lead to more people with disabilities being able to work in the media.

ITV Anglia's controller of regional news and programmes, Neil Thompson, commented: "The hallmark of the very best newsroom operation is its adaptability and flexibility. At Anglia News we have adapted Avid's "off-the-shelf" Newscutter editing system to suit Helen and she, as ever, has adapted brilliantly to make fantastic use of it.

"This state-of-the-art system not only allows us to turn stories around much faster, but ultimately gives reporters more influence and control in shaping the stories that appear on screen.

"If you are in the market for a new newsroom system, properly research and test potential flexibility. If you buy

the right system it should be future-proofed to ensure that, with some adaptations, any disabled television journalist can play a full part in a modern newsroom operation."



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CELEB SCENE**FRANCESCA MARTINEZ**

Labels only point out what we cannot do when we should be defined by what we can

This may sound like a really stupid question, but lately I have been wondering: what does the word “disabled” mean?

I am 27 and have had cerebral palsy all my life, so I guess I should know by now. But whenever someone refers to me as disabled, or I use the word to describe myself, it feels totally wrong.

I am not in denial, although I used to be. I grew up thinking I was really crap at being able-bodied (seriously). It feels like an inappropriate label to be stuck with.

I wonder how many disabled people feel this way, and if there are any who are actually comfortable with such a description?

What bugs me most of all is the emphasis on what I cannot do.

At least let's be consistent and apply this great logic to the entire human race, so we define each other by things we are not particularly good at;

premature-ejaculation men, unfunny people, bad-at-singing people, unable-to-conceive women, unable-to-stay-faithful people. Now that would be equality.

At the moment, if you are not disabled, you are able-bodied. These labels emphasise only what someone can do. How is this fair?

‘What bugs me most of all is the emphasis on what I cannot do’

Some might think we need these labels to describe “the norm” and anyone who differs from it, but I have never met a normal person, have you?

What is a normal person? Someone who is good at some things and not so good at others? Sounds like everyone I've ever met!

Nothing can be labelled unless it is being compared to something else.

A tall man is only tall next to a shorter man. That shorter man may be tall if he stands next to an even shorter man. Context is everything.

My brother may be able-bodied next to me, but is he disabled next to David Beckham, Kelly Holmes or Roger Federer? Is he mentally-challenged next to Stephen Hawking?

My point is that nothing in this world is set. We can never accurately define each other with the same one word all the time – it just does not work.

If we look at the whole spectrum of human ability, it is impossible to determine where able-bodied ends and disabled begins.

I wish we would stop separating ourselves into these two groups.

Whenever I am asked if I am disabled, I now say, “I am Francesca, good at some things, crap at others, just like everybody else.”

Francesca is a comedian and is working with the BBC on a television show based on her life

YOUTH SPEAK**IVY BROADHEAD**

Being the centre of attention can get on your nerves

I study Italian at A-level, so over half-term my lovely father took me and my stepsister to Florence for a few days.

It was touristy, which reduced our quota of Renaissance art, and rainy, although this was no barrier to ice cream consumption: it just meant we had to drink plenty of hot chocolate to balance out the equation. It was also a place where I was stared at constantly.

I have not lived a sheltered life and have been lucky enough to travel extensively in my 17 years, but I have never been stared at as much as I was in Italy.

Being stared at is something a lot of disabled people have to deal with daily.

On a good day, it is mildly amusing to see people walk into walls because they are too captivated to watch where they are going. I have a friend who likens it to being famous.

On a bad day it is

humiliating and infuriating; a constant reminder of how different you are to those around you.

Unlike the UK, where it is generally only children who stare, Italian adults eyeballed me unashamedly.

Perhaps they do not have short people in Italy, if by some sinister genetic screening program they have eliminated us from the gene pool, but I doubt it.

After a while I realised people were not just staring at me, they were gawping at everyone. There was no particular malice or intent, just a strange fascination.

This took some getting used to. The first few times I noticed it I tried to muster a more abusive version of ‘what do you think you are looking at?’ with minimal success.

Once I realised that it was not just me attracting this attention, it became almost liberating. Though I did start to miss the attention.

Ivy, 17, lives in Gateshead and is studying for her A-levels

WORLD VIEW**RICHARD HOWITT**

A ridiculous law condemning services has been defeated

What could have been one of the most disastrous pieces of legislation for disabled people passed through the European Parliament on 16 February.

The Bolkestein directive, named after the commissioner who introduced it, threatened to allow service providers from other European countries to work here under their own national standards, rather than those trusted by disabled people in the UK.

Any law that treats the services provided by an accountant and their client, in the same way as the intense personal bond between a carer and a disabled person, is clearly farcical, but this is what was presented to the European Parliament.

Thanks to common sense, negotiations and hard work, the final vote had a good outcome for disabled people.

I joined my fellow MEPs in voting to exclude social

services, among other areas, from this law.

Social services includes housing for disabled and elderly people. If this law had gone ahead such services would have been treated the same as commercial services.

To put it simply, this directive would have undermined the high quality of social services in the UK.

I campaigned closely with members of the Disability Rights Group in the parliament and with organisations such as the European Disability Forum to ensure this poor excuse for a law ended up in the bin.

I am proud to see the European Parliament stand up against a repulsive proposal and ensure disabled people, and the services provided to them, are not treated like any other part of the economy, but as a unique part of society's commitment to equality.

Richard is president of the European Parliament's All Party Disability Rights Group and a Labour politician in Europe

TOP TALK**JANE CAMPBELL**

With social care back on track it is time to go back to grass roots campaigning for disabled people

I will be leaving the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) at the end of March.

I have completed what I went there to do, which was to establish an organisation that truly involved the expertise of all social care stakeholders, especially service users, in the production of good practice.

I also yearn for more freedom to campaign for disabled people again.

Looking back on almost five years at SCIE, I am proud to have been part of developing a unique method of gathering knowledge about what works in social care.

Previously, social care practice was the domain of researchers, managers and civil servants.

The disabled people who use services were largely missing, apart from the occasional token presence.

But people who use services know what we need and how it

can be best delivered.

SCIE has supported service users to participate in its networks, collaborated with user-led organisations, set up its Partners Council and recruited service users to the staff team and our commissions. Over time, this wholesale inclusivity became SCIE's unique selling point.

‘I also yearn for more freedom to campaign for disabled people again’

The job is not finished yet, but enough has been done for me to feel confident that defaulting to traditional ways will be difficult.

Change is also overdue among social care leaders.

As a disabled woman and service user, I have never felt part of this “members only” club. I have always been welcomed at events but my

contribution is seen as a novel addition, not central to the debate.

There should be more room for newcomers with imagination, and more willingness to include other service users who could offer new and creative perspectives.

If social care is to change, SCIE's way of working needs to permeate every level, especially at the top.

The door will not suddenly spring open. SCIE will need to keep pushing, and push harder.

As for me, I am off to build my own independent website based on the concept of living with dignity.

It will encompass Not Dead Yet UK, a campaigning network of disabled people who oppose euthanasia and make writing on independent living, supporting dignity, human rights, and equality of opportunity more widely available. It's good to be back.

Jane was outgoing chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence and is also a DRC commissioner and a former chair of the British Council of Disabled People

Government must help disabled war vets

Soldiers who serve in Iraq are coming home to battle mental health difficulties on their own, because the army and the government have turned their backs on them. Something must be done, says Shaun Rusling

Understanding of the condition known as combat stress or shell shock has come a long way since the First and Second World Wars. It is now known correctly as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or in lay terms, a natural reaction to an unusual situation.

Speaking from personal experience, there is nothing more unusual than a war. You are exposed to multiple traumatic events, each compounding the other.

Full-blown PTSD does not happen straight away. The soldier usually experiences an initial Post Traumatic Stress Reaction (PTSR). This is a shock to the system that causes significant stress to the mind and body.

The telltale signs include mild confusion, hyper awareness, poor sleep patterns and nightmares.

If medical staff ignore these signs, they will develop into what is known as PTSD, where the soldier's nightmares intrude on his daily life.

If the problem is not addressed at an early stage, the soldier will go on to develop a depressive disorder. This is a known medical fact.

Sadly, I can vouch for this myself because I have PTSD and major depression because I did not receive treatment after the 1991 Gulf War.

I was showing the signs, but they were either ignored or not understood until I experienced a full physical and mental breakdown in 1993.

Have we put measures in place to protect those serving in the second Gulf and Iraq War? No.

'Many soldiers turn to drink and drugs to hide what has happened to them'

Why? Because it costs money to train staff and troops to recognise, diagnose and treat the condition and there are not enough medical staff in the army anymore.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) position since 1991 has been to ignore the issue completely. To acknowledge the problem while a soldier is still in service might lead to a compensation claim. Those sympathetic to the MoD might say they are between a rock and a hard place.

Many suffering soldiers from the Gulf Wars simply opt for a premature voluntary release (PVR). This is encouraged by the armed forces so they will not be liable for a war disablement pension.

The PVR is not a medical discharge, which would warrant an immediate award of disablement allowances.

Despite the level of suffering, some soldiers will sign anything just to get out.

Is there treatment available in the NHS? Because PTSD is not fully understood nationally in the NHS, again due to money and funding, this condition is at the bottom of the pile when it comes to treatment.

Treatment is patchy at best. However, there are some psychiatrists and many nurses who are genuinely interested. However, there are not enough and there is certainly no national framework of diagnosis and treatment.

So who is responsible? The MoD says the NHS is responsible for diagnosis and treatment, while at the same time ensuring any medical records referring to PTSD or PTSR are not made available to any physician inquiring about the health of a soldier.



Isolated: Sean Rusling, pictured in Iraq during the first Gulf War, did not receive treatment for the telltale signs of post traumatic stress disorder and consequently had a breakdown

Not at all satisfactory.

Many ill soldiers turn to drink and drugs to hide what has happened to them. Many end up in prison. Many more like myself end up in a wilderness, unable to enjoy what life can bring, almost like a zombie as life passes you by. Many, many more commit suicide in desperation.

What is needed is a consensus of medical understanding of modern warfare-related ill health and the known exposures, both physical and psychological.

The NHS's work must be funded by the government.

It is morally wrong to send servicemen and women to war without providing the necessary support and treatment.

Clearly the MoD does not want to deal with the problem, because it will affect them financially.

Senior government officials must override the MoD and put in place treatment facilities now. Shaun Rusling is vice-chairman of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association.

KEY NOTES

ANDY RICKELL

If education is segregated we will never learn how to appreciate each other's diversity

What were you watching on TV at 9pm on 22 February? Perhaps it was *Crimewatch* or *American Pie 2*. You almost certainly missed the *Teachers TV* programme that addressed one of society's most fundamental issues.

Chaired by Jonathan Dimbleby, with a panel of eight including Baroness Warnock, Chris Woodhead and me representing Scope, *The Big Debate* tackled educational inclusion. Do watch it*, if you care about equality for disabled children and adults.

The panel was equally split between passionate advocates for inclusion and staunch supporters of limiting it.

The worst bit was hearing a panellist say the social impact

of a segregated education system was irrelevant.

I am committed to inclusion that works for all disabled children and young people, irrespective of the level of support needed. Mainstream education does not yet fully

'I am committed to inclusion that works for all disabled children and young people'

offer this in practice even if it claims to in theory. Such genuine inclusion will require radical change based on real evidence of what works.

With our allies in the movement and elsewhere, Scope has been lobbying at the

United Nations to ensure the latest draft of the UN Convention on the rights of disabled people includes the right to inclusion for all disabled children.

In this country, the new education bill seems to be making education a private commodity. As a result, our society may become less effective. We will not get the enhanced benefits of team and community activity that come with being educated together.

We need to learn how to combine our diverse abilities for everyone's benefit. And without amendment, the bill does nothing to advance the inclusive aspirations of parents for their disabled children.

* Download *Inclusion* at www.teacherstv.co.uk

Andy is executive director for diversity, politics and planning at Scope

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Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the acting editor Sarah Hobson, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, minicom: 020 7619 7332, fax: 020 7619 7331, email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

About time we talked access

I was interested in your report on the Leonard Cheshire (LC) survey of access to public houses (*DN Extra March, page 3*). The disappointing results were not surprising, as I have just spent many hours contacting public houses, to see which will be accessible to me for meals during a seven-day tour around England.

There are some bright spots. Many pubs owned by the St Austell Brewery, in Devon and Cornwall, for example, are accessible. The problems are not limited to pubs, though.

Recently, one of my carers told me she believed a local hairdressing salon was accessible. I phoned them and was assured that there was no step, just part of the door frame that was one inch high.

On the way, I had problems reaching the parking machine, and my problems with access

continued at the salon.

I was confronted with a step at least four inches high. Eventually, one of the girls came out to me. I asked if she was aware of the Disability Discrimination Act. She was not and suggested I try another salon.

LC is right to call for pub owners to introduce access policies and carry out disability equality training. However, this should extend to all service providers.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) still offers excellent support for our efforts, but we should make haste because next year it will be absorbed into the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

It is by no means certain this will support disabled people as effectively as the DRC has done. Alan Tooth, by email

We must be vigilant when we are vulnerable

I was interested to read your article about Margaret Kennedy and her work with the Catholic church in their investigation of allegations of abuse of disabled children and adults (*DN March, page 21*).

My disability was caused by an assault by a vicar in the Anglican church. I am taking the difficult step of writing about this because I don't want other people to suffer in the way I am.

Margaret Kennedy's work is vital in ensuring that abuse in the Catholic Church is minimised, but I wonder whether readers are aware of the situation within the Anglican church that could place those who worship there in a vulnerable position?

These days we assume that all professionals are regularly and adequately supervised. While this will not deter the abusers, it will often flag up warning signs and alert supervisors to potential problems. Supervision provides a safe environment for the professional to discuss problems they are having and, occasionally, dangerous attitudes or behaviour will

come to light, and this will allow problems to be dealt with before abuse occurs.

It is important that all those professionals who deal with children, vulnerable adults and people facing difficulties in their life are regularly supervised and supported. Vicars are, of course, in such a situation – they work with people facing bereavement, significant life changes and illnesses that can be terminal. They discuss situations that even a court of law cannot demand to know about and anything the vicar says is considered sacrosanct.

Like most people, I assumed that vicars are supervised like any other professionals, but no.

I would like readers who attend the Anglican church to know that their vicar is not required to accept supervision, although they may choose to. If they all were, the injuries and permanent disability I have may not have occurred.

Readers who are part of a religious community, particularly the Anglican church, should ask their spiritual leaders if they receive



regular supervision. If they don't, then please be aware of this in your dealings with that person.

Obviously the great majority of vicars will be as decent and honest as anyone else in society, but there is no system in place to protect you or them.

If you feel strongly about this subject and wish to protect yourself and other members of your community, then write to the head of your community – in the case of the Anglican church it would be the bishop in your diocese – and demand that they bring their practices into line with all other professional services. I have been asking them to supervise their vicars for four years now.

Don't let indifference leave you vulnerable.

Name and address supplied

More disabled people in advertising please

I have noticed that any advert with three or more people in it always features a person from an ethnic minority.

I applaud this as it cuts

across the race equality barrier. But it is not often, if at all, you see a disabled person in any advertisement.

There are plenty of talented

disabled performers and I would like to see as many disabled people in adverts as people from ethnic minorities.

Mike McCunniff, Halifax

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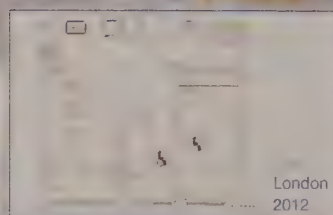
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Service users will benefit from deal

I refer to your report on Northamptonshire Council's decision to award a direct payments (DP) contract to the Shaw Trust (*DN March, page 10*). You did not explain why the council's decision "has had a grim effect on services for disabled people".

We begin the contract this month and it is our intention that service users will benefit from a wider range of services.

It is true, unlike the Disabled People Alliance Northamptonshire (DPAN), we are not "100 per cent run and controlled by disabled people". But 20 per cent of our staff members declare a disability.

Our services are driven by service users. It is essential we listen and respond to our clients; they are the reason for our existence.

We are delighted to extend such services in Northampton. Tim Cooper, managing director, Shaw Trust Work and Independence

web watch

All the latest from the Disability Now forums and Have your say pages, found at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Adult toys for disabled people

After a conversation with my sister, who has CP, we got to thinking about how unsuitable adult toys are for people with disabilities to use. For example if a disability affects motor control in the hands, which is easiest to control when using a toy, a dial or a push button control? Also the materials used to make many of these toys are based on what looks best. But if you are partially sighted or blind, which feels the best without the visual stimulus? I'm interested in comments or experiences anyone has had.

Fran

I need a device that helps with sexual positions. Due to my disability I cannot straighten my legs and therefore women find it difficult to be on top and because my legs just flop all over the place.

Jonny Mnemonic

Disabled people's needs are so varied. Perhaps it would be better for certain products just to add descriptive labels like 'great texture' or 'large, easy-to-manage buttons'?

Funky Mango

For most people with damaged hands buttons are the best, provided they don't need to be pressed hard. They are much easier than controls which require twisting motions. Many disabled people have problems with sliders designed to be pushed by one finger, as they are often stiff and awkward. You can even hurt yourself trying to use them. This is also the case when replacing batteries.

Jennie Kermode

Let's stop moaning and do something

Having read many stories about the inappropriate use of disabled parking bays and blue badges, and having experienced similar problems myself, I can fully understand how disabled people feel about this subject. But instead of just moaning about it take action. Do something positive. Complain, write to the store and copy you local MP in on it. This goes for all areas that fail to provide disabled people with adequate service, not just car parking.

John Noble

The only thing that would have a real impact is having a tow truck parked at supermarkets. Clamping does not free up the space.

Chris Page

If a carpark is on public and council-owned land, then you have the right to make a complaint about a vehicle parked illegally in a marked disabled parking bay, under Section 47 of the Road Traffic Act. The police and council can remove the offending vehicle, clamp it, tow it and/or fine the driver. If the carpark is on private land, such as a hospital, doctor's surgery or supermarket are classed as service providers and must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This ensures a reasonable adjustment has been made by providing a marked disabled parking bay for its customers. Any such carparks must be monitored.

arranman

I have complained to my MP numerous times, also to supermarkets and brought the misuse to the prospective Tory candidate. Nothing. Anybody parks in the disabled spaces. The police walk past and do nothing. Nobody cares. The disabled are a minority.

My husband will use them if he thinks he can get away with it.

Only the elderly are disabled according to him so that does not even include me. With that attitude coming from the spouse of someone who has an upper mobility disability and claims DLA for life, it is hardly surprising that virtually everybody too has the same attitude.

Sue

backchat



● It can't be much fun being David Blunkett's guide dog.

The MP told *DN* how he and his canine assistants are constantly the butt of media jokes, half-truths and lies.

Sadie, his current guide dog, has had her reputation splattered across London papers after allegedly stealing a Yorkshire pudding from the plate of *Sun* editor Rebekah Wade, while she was powdering her nose.

Blunkett assures Backchat that Sadie spent the entire meal lying contentedly on her belly under the table.

Besides, he says, it being the day after the Brits Music Awards, a Yorkshire pudding was the last thing Ms Wade wanted on her plate.

They should be glad guide dogs can't sue for libel.

● If imitation is the ultimate form of flattery, Backchat is positively blushing.

The appearance of a new diary column was surely excellent news for readers of social care magazine *Community Care*.

We are touched that it has decided to call its new column...Backchat.

Have your say and join others chatting at www.disabilitynow.org.uk



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Blunkett takes a breather



David Blunkett has finally escaped the media wolf pack. But the former home secretary tells John Pring that he still wants to set the record straight

A roomy office with a committee table, sofas and 25 support staff waiting outside the door.

That was how *DN* reporter Rod Hermeston described David Blunkett's ministerial office at the department for

education and employment in March 2000.

Six years on, Blunkett works from a small, anonymous office in Portcullis House, opposite the House of Commons. The days of having 25 support staff at his beck and call are

gone, although there are still two plain-clothed police officers sitting outside his office.

He is slowly becoming re-accustomed to life as a backbench MP, following a traumatic 18 months in which sections of the media were constantly snapping at his ministerial ankles.

First, there were the events that led to his resignation as home secretary in December 2004.

He re-entered the cabinet the following year as work and pensions secretary, but resigned from that post last November after new and unconnected revelations.

Despite this tortuous trial by media, he insists he is not wallowing in self-pity.

"When you're in your early years of politics, you thrive on being the focus of attention; the oxygen of publicity is something that invigorates you and gives you adrenalin.

"I have had enough of that and at the moment I am enjoying my weekends, because for month after month after month I didn't have a Friday or a Saturday when the papers weren't ferreting around to try and find some snippet of information or some crumb that they could use on Sunday, and I did not have a Sunday morning when my life was not made a misery reading (what was) often garbage and untruth."

During his four years as education and employment secretary, he tells *DN*, he wondered how long he could keep up the huge workload.

But when he became home secretary in 2001 the pressure increased. He soon had to deal with the new heightened threat from international terrorism after the September 11 attacks, and his workload just kept rising.

'I tried to prove too hard and too intensively that I could do the job'

The job put him under "enormous pressure, to the point where I was working too many hours, and was putting myself under too much stress," he says.

"I have looked back at my notes recently and there is no question whatsoever that in those first four years [as education secretary] I felt beleaguered as well as sometimes frustrated in terms of the time and energy it took to get things moving, but I didn't sufficiently learn the lesson that it was going to be even greater at the home office, and therefore to pace myself better.

"With the best will in the world, if you're handling material on tape and you're

using tape for dictation it just takes an enormous number of hours in addition to what would be expected from any senior cabinet minister. The hours were killers. If you work 16 hours a day for six-and-a-half days a week, it's bound to take its toll."

He now wishes he had taken a longer break after resigning as home secretary in December 2004 before returning to ministerial office, although he doesn't regret the six months he spent as work and pensions secretary.

He blames himself for failing to pace himself.

"You don't have to proof-read every policy document three, five, seven times over. You don't have to do everything yourself. The reason I did that was initially I didn't want anybody to say that because I couldn't see, I wasn't on top of the detail."

He believes he has "broken a bit of ground" and thinks there are lessons to be learned for other disabled people who might achieve ministerial office.

"I think that I tried to prove too hard and too intensively that I could do the job not just as well as but better than other people, and I didn't need to. I hope that those with any kind of special need in the future won't have to, because people will have realised that it can be done and they will assess your performance as a politician, as an individual, and not as someone with a disability."

Released from his ministerial responsibilities, he feels "invigorated rather than crushed", although he is having to adjust to the loss of the "most enormous range of support systems".

He is using his new-found freedom to move house, to write his new column for *The Sun* and to receive training on how to use the internet.

He is finally entering the 21st century, partly it seems because his old-fashioned methods of working probably played a part in both his resignations.

He has refused to blame his inability to read printed documents, but clearly believes it contributed to his "mistakes".

With the case of the visa renewal for his ex-lover's nanny, when home secretary – he was accused of seeking special treatment – he says he was using her case to demonstrate "a catastrophic failure of policy" in the processing of visa applications.

Other people would have

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and gets his life back



Old-fashioned: David Blunkett with the ancient Braille machine he still uses. It may have played a part in his downfall

clarified this by way of a scribbled note to an adviser, or sent an email, which he never uses.

"I think I might have done more to recognise that my old-fashioned method of proceeding wasn't always going to work," he says.

With his second resignation – he was criticised for taking a company directorship while out of the cabinet, without seeking the necessary guidance for ex-ministers from an independent committee – he was unable to read the ministerial code as carefully as he would have liked and didn't have access to support from his

office, which was shut during the general election.

"Because I am learning the new technology, I am not yet in a position to say whether if someone had encouraged or supported or forced this on me, I'd have been in a better position. I think it made it more difficult but, as I say, lots of things were more difficult, but I have never used them as an excuse."

It is clear he retains influence within government circles. He helped his friend John Hutton with the Incapacity Benefit green paper after his resignation in November, and has contributed to the

WHO IS HE?

David Blunkett, 58, has a degree from the University of Sheffield and a postgraduate certificate in education. After graduation, he worked for the East Midlands Gas Board and as a tutor in politics and industrial relations.

He was leader of Sheffield City Council from 1980 to 1987 and has been Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside since 1987.

He is divorced and has three children.

education white paper.

He interrupts the interview to take a phone call from Jacqui Smith, the schools minister.

As for the green paper itself, Blunkett is happy with its contents, but says it will be vital to make sure that programmes are funded properly.

He is, for instance, a fan of the Access to Work programme, and last year reversed a decision to cut its budget.

Despite his continuing influence, he will not admit to an ambition to return to the cabinet. All he will say is he has "ambitions to play a part in public life".

"I certainly don't think that anybody would thank me at the moment inside government or with the ever-vigilant media if I started talking about coming back in. The wolves would sharpen their fangs again and I am very happy for the wolves to take themselves off, preferably not to get their fangs into anyone else."

Despite his obvious unhappiness with the wolf-pack, he is keen to do more radio and TV work.

And although angry and upset at the way he has been targeted and attacked – "half the things I have read about myself over quite a long period now have been completely made up" – he knows "opening a second front with the British media" would be futile, and he has his weekly column for *The Sun*.

Ever since he became an MP in 1987, he and his guide dogs have been the butt of jokes, half-truths and lies, on television and in the press.

Blunkett has tried to treat it light-heartedly so he could not be accused of being "so politically correct and hyper-sensitive that I couldn't take a joke".

But sometimes, he says, the joke wears a bit thin, such as

when a news organisation tried to borrow a guide dog to simulate his expected resignation.

He himself brings up the subject of last year's "dreadful" and "deeply hurtful" Channel Four satire, loosely based on episodes from his social and ministerial life.

Friends who watched it said Bernard Hill did a "pretty good physical portrayal" of him, he says.

He watched the last ten minutes of the film, to "test out what the actors and actresses were up to", but found Hill's verbal portrayal, in which he spoke incredibly slowly, extremely patronising.

"Obviously, blind people think very slowly and therefore they speak very slowly," he tells me, deliberately slowly.

This interview appears to be an early step in rebuilding his public reputation.

He talks about "bit by bit, restoring your standing and esteem and credibility. It takes time, so I am going to give myself time".

It is clear he feels he was wronged by the media "wolves", but has so far resisted explaining the detailed background to his two resignations.

He says it would make him appear "bitter" and that "nobody loves a whiner", but it is also clear that he is reserving

much of this material for a new memoir.

"I am biding my time in order to tell and bring out the truth," he says.

He wants to show people that "judgements they made and perceptions they had were deeply mistaken".

The Channel Four film is one episode he plans to "reflect on" in his book.

"All I am asking is that when people do know the truth that they make their own reassessment.

"I will tell it as it is at an appropriate time in a way that isn't a whinge and doesn't blame everybody else for my problems, and I will be honest about where I carry responsibility for the mistakes that I made."

When I contact him later to clarify his writing plans, he tells me through his assistant that he is "currently researching for a book and details will emerge".

He is writing the book himself, she adds.

As the interview is about to end, he insists that he has not "run out of steam", hinting perhaps that he has not yet given up on the idea of a return to government.

"I have got a lot of energy," he says, "and I hope I have got a long time yet to use that experience for good, and I shall continue doing that."



Blunkett on his new book: **"All I am asking is that when people know the truth they make their own resessment"**



Blunkett on rebuilding his reputation: **"It takes time, so I am going to give myself time"**



Blunkett on his time as home secretary: **"I was putting myself under too much stress"**

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From the magnificent glasshouse to delicious snacks, visit Kew Gardens this Easter for an interesting and accessible day out, writes Sandy Eifion-Jones

After the cold winter months, a visit to the Kew Royal Botanical Gardens at Eastertime will be the perfect spring tonic.

On visiting Kew Gardens in March, I discovered a stunning carpet of crocuses with masses of daffodils welcoming the change of season. This follows on from its annual Orchid Exhibition in the Princess of Wales Conservatory. With its magnificent display of over 250,000 orchids, I will be sure to visit next year.

But I do recommend a visit to this famous glasshouse at any time of year. With ten climate zones featuring a superb array of plants and trees, it is a must-see. Beware of the catfish in the central pond though – it may look innocent,

but it will bite your finger off.

Despite the vast area occupied by Kew Gardens, there is 95 per cent access for wheelchair users. For visitors with hearing or visual impairments, there are induction loops and a large print map, produced with advice from the RNIB, available at the gate. There are also virtual tours on the website and tapes for visually impaired visitors. There is even one guide who is learning standard British Sign Language.

Wheelchairs can be borrowed free of charge from all entry gates and can be booked in advance, except on weekends and bank holidays. Two electric mobility scooters are also available.

Toilet facilities are excellent



Clockwise from left: Crocuses; by the water; Alpine House



and within easy reach of all the main attractions and gates. These are marked on the map provided upon arrival and are spotlessly clean.

Ramped access paths have been constructed to blend in with the surroundings and are clearly signposted.

What about all those acres to walk on tired legs? For a small fee, the Kew Explorer service is the answer. You can also book on the Discovery, a free mobility service, which enables groups of disabled people and their carers to enjoy the magic of these colourful, vibrant gardens. The driver of the bus can communicate using Makaton if required and, with requirements discussed in advance, educational tours can be tailored to people with learning difficulties.

When you are ready for a break there are plenty of options. At the Orangery restaurant enjoy a freshly prepared main meal. For a light snack, the Victoria Gate coffee shop is good. At the White Peaks outside, you can choose a chargrilled meal with a freshly baked pastry, or you can simply enjoy afternoon tea with friends at the Pavilion.

Apart from the astonishing springtime bulbs bursting into flower, there is plenty of Easter entertainment on offer at Kew Gardens. This includes special activities for children, with a series of sleepovers and an exhibition of charcoal drawings by John Hubbard.

Do not miss the delightful new Alpine House that opened last month.

When you arrive at Kew Gardens there are three disabled parking bays near the main gate. There are also several spaces in the car park next to the Brentford Gate and parking on Kew Road provides access to Victoria Gate.

Take time to enjoy Kew Gardens and see for yourself how much it has to offer.

• Tel: 020 8332 5121, www.rbgekew.org.uk

* Automated 24hr info line, tel: 020 8332 5655, wheelchair booking, tel: 020 8332 5121

Blooming all year

Peter Ingram-Monk tours Threave House and its gardens in Scotland

A major visitor attraction in Scotland, Threave gardens and estate cover some 1500 acres, and are located about a mile from Castle Douglas in Kirkcudbrightshire.

The gardens of the estate cover 64 acres on a hillside with magnificent views. There are well-made paths throughout, but, for the less sporty wheelchair user, a “pusher” would be invaluable.

It would be very easy to spend a whole day just observing the wonderful range of plants, shrubs and trees, which are in superb condition, including displays of flowering shrubs and herbaceous borders.

Even on a winter’s day, you can tell it’s a garden for all seasons.

The greenhouses are divided into tropical, warm and cool areas and contain excellent specimens of very attractive and unusual plants.

This area and the walled garden, which includes trees, fruit and vegetables, are on level ground with paved or good-surfaced paths.

From the hill summit overlooking the gardens, well worth the push, it is possible on a clear day to see the Galloway Hills over a distance of some 30 miles.

Some idea of the extent and variety of the gardens can be gained from the feature areas; the rock garden, heathers, roses, conifers, and even the secret garden. They all have a special attraction of their own and illustrate a high level of gardening expertise.

Threave has a school for practical gardening and students who complete the year-long course are in strong demand worldwide.

Threave House is a grand Victorian mansion, which stands on the hill overlooking the gardens. It was completed in 1872 by William Gordon, who owned the estate. It is a beautiful house, fully restored after being used as student accommodation for a while. Most of its original furniture and artefacts have been reinstated.

While the gardens are open year-round, access to the house is from April to October. There are guided tours and special party tours can be accommodated.

Level access to the ground floor immediately from the car park takes you to the kitchen, which has a museum of domestic memorabilia.

An oak staircase takes you to the second floor, which is not



accessible to wheelchair users; however, there are plans to produce a video that can be viewed at first-floor level.

Throughout the season the house is decorated with flowers picked from the garden and arranged by members of the local flower clubs.

Adjacent to the main car park is the visitor centre, which has two accessible parking bays near the door. There is a restaurant, shop and a plant sales area. Powerchairs are available, although it is best to book in advance. This area is generally level, although signage and the accessible toilets could be improved.

A short journey takes you to the nearby Kelton Mains, within the Threave estate. A reconstructed and surfaced half-mile walk, with only one modest gradient, leads to the ferry and Threave Castle.

The castle was built in the 14th century, with a tower and defences dating from 1455, making it one of the oldest in Europe.

A recently constructed jetty and a boat take you across the short stretch of water to the castle, owned by Historic Scotland. Unfortunately it is not accessible to wheelchair users, mainly due to the steep steps on the ferry. With more consideration and forethought, there could be a negotiable slope and a wheelyboat.

In the opposite direction is a brand new and fully accessible bird hide (*with Peter, above*) overlooking the nature reserve, installed by the National Trust for Scotland. Swans, geese, ducks and a whole range of small birds can be seen from the hide, and at the right time of day, badgers and otters.

National Trust for Scotland is to be congratulated for the efforts they have made, and continue to make, to ensure this particular estate and its attractions are as accessible and practical to as many people as possible.

• National Trust for Scotland, tel: 0131 243 9300, www.nts.org.uk



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www.nationaltrust.org.uk



(NTPU/Ian Shaw)

A whole plot of love

Allotments help disabled people blossom mentally and physically, discovers Thomas Yocum



For Cherry Cooper, it all began with an idea. Cherry, an allotmenteer with her husband Rob (pictured right) at the Bushy Park Allotments in Hampton, south west London, says she wanted to make a place that was more accessible to older and disabled people.

"I just see what a wonderful therapeutic area we have in Bushy Park Allotments," she explains. "We have friends who are disabled and are wheelchair users. I have always wanted to bring them to show them the allotments and I cannot."

So she set out to do something about it, bringing up the idea with various people in the community.

"They shrugged their shoulders and said we do not have the money," she says.

Undeterred, she approached a local funding group, the Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity. She had never applied for grant money, she explains, but the charity was very supportive, working with her to prepare a proposal and presentation. The work paid off: she received £12,500.

With the money secured, and Richmond Council providing two allotment plots for the project, Cherry approached Cleve West, a leading landscape designer and gardening columnist for the *Independent* newspaper, for help.

Cleve gladly donated his time and knowledge, designing an outdoor space to suit a variety of needs and individuals.

"It is always quite difficult designing something like this for disabled people because there are so many different types of disabilities to consider," Cleve explains. "We tried to give a variety of bed heights – tall ones for standing and lower ones for wheelchair users. From a traditional gardener's point of view, it might look a bit sterile, but the point is, people with disabilities can get straight up there and work."

With the help of friends and

fellow allotmenters, Cherry waded through the waist-high weeds and brambles, slowly clearing the patch. They levelled the front portion of the site to provide a paved area with raised beds, and turned the rear into a grassy young orchard with a path leading to a shady area. Students from nearby Richmond College donated their time to build the raised beds.

Three months after work began, the disabled access plot was ready for the 2005 season.

Three local disabled groups from the borough soon had the beds brimming with a variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers.

For Mark O'Reilly, a support worker for one of the groups, the Silver Birches Resource Centre, a branch of Elizabeth Fitzroy Support in Richmond, the Bushy Park plot was perfect.

"It is fantastic. People enjoy being able to grow things from seed. We come down, do a bit of gardening, maybe have a picnic. It is somewhere we can go that is different, and safe."

Across the UK, similar things are happening. More and more accessible allotments and gardens are being developed. And it is not just about the fruit and veg. Research is increasingly showing something many

people have known all along: gardening is good for you.

Researchers say social and therapeutic horticulture (STH) has real and positive benefits. The Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University examined the use of STH for a number of different groups of people.

Their research reported benefits including increased self-esteem, the development of horticultural, social and work skills, an increased sense of general well-being, the opportunity for social interaction and the development of independence.

In some instances, the study found, involvement in STH programmes can lead to employment or education.

Gardening charity Thrive, based in Reading, teamed with Loughborough University to look at two dozen projects in the UK. This study found that undertaking different activities allowed many participants to recognise and acknowledge their own competence and that they gained satisfaction from completing tasks and realising they had the skills to do so.

It is estimated that as many as 21,000 disabled people currently participate in STH programmes each week and



that number is growing.

Back at Bushy Park Allotments, Mark and his team of disabled allotmenters are getting ready for the 2006 season. Richmond Council says they are investigating the possibility of developing similar spaces around the borough.

Like in many places around the UK, the idea of providing disabled access for budding allotmenters seems to have taken root.

Thomas Yocum is a member of the Bushy Park Allotments governing committee. He is currently a senior press officer for the Disability Rights Commission

Want to know more?

Contact Thrive or the Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI)

Thrive's Carry on Gardening website – www.carryongardening.org.uk – offers a range of helpful advice and information, including design, funding, adapted tools and other resources. Tel: 0118 988 5688, or visit www.thrive.org.uk

ARI's website – www.farmgarden.co.uk – has lots of useful information, including a fact sheet about improving access for disabled people and those with mental health needs.

ARI also offers training courses for associations that are currently improving, or plan to improve, accessibility to allotment gardening on their sites.

Two dates have been set for 2006: 14 June – Bristol; 2 July – York. Tel: 0117 963 1551 or email: ari@farmgarden.co.uk

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Green-fingered gadgets

Gardening can be simpler and more enjoyable with the right tools. Lucy Andrews has some handy tips

There are many tools that can make gardening easier, but finding the right ones needs some thought. Some tools can help people who find using traditional tools difficult. Large grip tools are useful for people who have difficulty gripping and handles with a soft or contoured grip are more comfortable to hold.

Long-handled tools help people who have difficulty bending and reaching. Also, the extra leverage that the long handles provide can help people who lack strength.

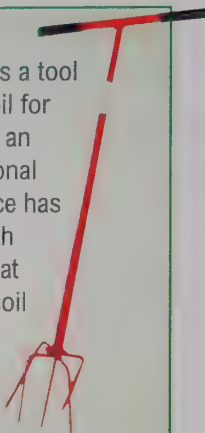
Gardening at this time of year is about tidying and preparing. Here are some tools that can help.

TWISTER

What? The Twirlydig is a tool to help prepare the soil for planting and provides an alternative to a traditional garden fork. The device has a T-shaped handle with prongs at the end set at different angles. The soil is turned over using a corkscrew action.

How much? £20

Where? Darlac, tel: 01753 547790, www.darlac.com



PLANTER

What? The Wolf Bulb Planter is a device to help with planting bulbs and small bedding plants, making the task less fiddly and easier to do

one-handed. The device is pushed into the soil to the required depth to remove a plug of soil. The bulb is then dropped into the hole and covered over with the plug that is released by thumb pressure on the end of the handle.

How much? £7.99

Where? Wolf Garden, tel: 01495 306600, www.wolf-garden.com



PRUNER

What? The Comfort Pruning Loppers is a lightweight cutting tool useful for pruning branches up to 35mm thick. The loppers are 50cm long, have large comfortable handles and are relatively lightweight, weighing 620g. Available with anvil or overlapping blades. Overlapping blades are like scissors – the blades overlap when they are closed. Anvil blades don't overlap – when they are closed the two sharp edges contact each other.

How much? £29.99

Where? Gardena UK, tel: 0191 217 1537, www.gardena.co.uk

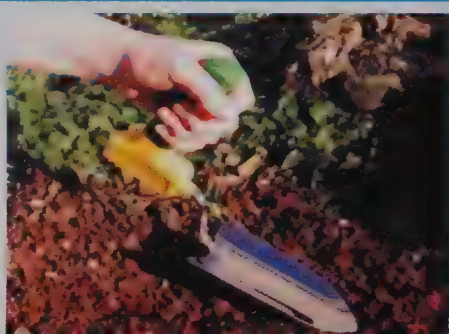


EASY GRIPPING

What? The Easi-grip trowel, fork and rake are a range of short-handled tools with right-angled, contoured handles to give a more comfortable grip and reduce wrist strain. The tools have the option of a forearm cuff to bypass the wrist and distribute weight further up the arm. The same company supplies an add-on handle to convert existing short and long-handled tools, again with the option of the forearm cuff.

How much? Hand tools £9.95 or £25 for set of three; add-on handle £15, cuff £5.50

Where? Peta UK, tel: 01245 231118, www.peta-uk.com

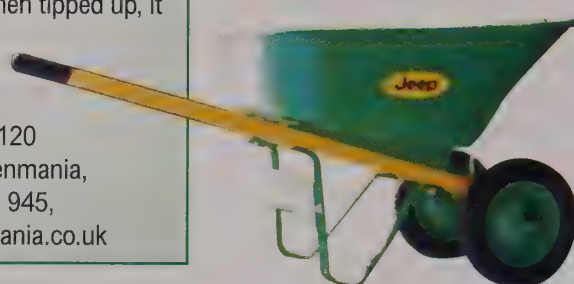


WHEELS

What? The Jeep Bigboy Wheelbarrow has twin front wheels to increase stability, and puncture-proof tyres. It also has a 120-litre capacity plastic tub and handles that are angled to help distribute weight over the wheels. When tipped up, it can stand on its end without support.

How much? £120

Where? Gardenmania, tel: 08701 999 945, www.gardenmania.co.uk

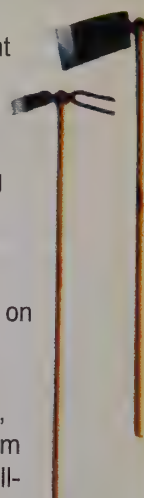


GET DIGGING

What? The Azada is a digging tool that has a blade at right angles to the handle, providing an alternative to a spade. A swinging motion is used to break into and loosen the soil, putting less strain on the back. A range of different blade widths is available, ranging from 7.5cm to 20cm. The small-bladed version includes a double prong to help with weeding.

How much? From £22

Where? Get-digging, tel: 01263 837278, www.get-digging.co.uk



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E enquiries@steeringdevelopments.co.uk

ADU11-04

GOT AN EQUIPMENT QUESTION?

Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). If you have a question on equipment for Lucy please email editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or post it to the usual address. The DLF helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, and provides information and advice on choosing and using equipment. Contact the helpline on 0845 130 9177 or email: advice@dlf.org.uk

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Readers are facing increasing problems using hospital car parks. In addition to the limited spaces, health trusts are charging for parking. Motoring

correspondent Helen Smith investigates

At many hospitals across the UK, having a blue badge does not entitle you to free parking. Privately run car parks and hospitals can charge whatever they like.

Many blue badge holders cannot use public transport to get to hospital. Although buses and park and ride are gradually becoming accessible, this is often not a viable option. It is fair to say that many disabled people have to go to hospital more often than non-disabled people. If I had to go just once a year maybe I wouldn't mind shelling out for parking, but last year I had to go to hospital



PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA WILLIAMS

Hospital parking pinches pennies

almost once a month.

The hospital I usually go to is Addenbrooke's in Cambridge. They operate a first-come first-serve disabled parking scheme. If you are lucky enough to find a disabled parking space outside the hospital, you can park for free, but if they are all taken you

have to use the car park and pay – £2.50 for up to two hours, £12.50 for up to eight hours.

I also go to the Norwich and Norfolk Hospital, which offers a fairer scheme. They have limited disabled parking outside the front of the hospital but if it is full, and you do have

to park in a car park, you can show your blue badge at reception. They will stamp it so your parking is still free. This is great as long as you can make your way from a space quite far away.

Elizabeth Wade from East Sussex was so outraged at having to pay for parking at

Worthing Hospital she wrote to DN. Elizabeth, who is a disabled driver, went to hospital and parked in a disabled bay in front of the building, unaware she had to pay. When she returned to her car she found, to her dismay, that she couldn't get out of the car park because she



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Sickening experience: Disabled parking spaces are limited at many hospitals, forcing people to park further away



didn't have a ticket. In her letter she writes: "Charging disabled patients for hospital car parking cannot be justified. My criticism isn't only about charging, it's about the additional stress and inconvenience placed on disabled people when they have to bother with coins

and ticket machines."

Worthing hospital was unable to comment in response to Elizabeth's problems.

The woefully inadequate number of disabled spaces at our hospitals is also becoming a problem. In a letter to the local paper Milton Keynes Citizen, an anonymous

reader writes that he was taking his wife, who is a wheelchair user, to Milton Keynes General Hospital. He had to cancel the outpatient appointment at the last minute because they could not find a place to park. He has had to arrange for hospital transport to take her next time. He is quite able to take his wife himself, if only he could park.

He writes: "Would it not be better to provide a few more dedicated disabled slots, purely on financial grounds, not withstanding the inconvenience and stress caused by trying to park at the hospital?"

When I put this to the hospital, Bob Heavisides, the director of facilities, said: "As a solution to the parking problems, we were much relieved to hear on 16 February that our hospital was successful in a bid for funding from the government to build a 1,000 space multi-storey car park on our site. We will be considering the needs of blue badge holders in the ground floor area of the multi-storey

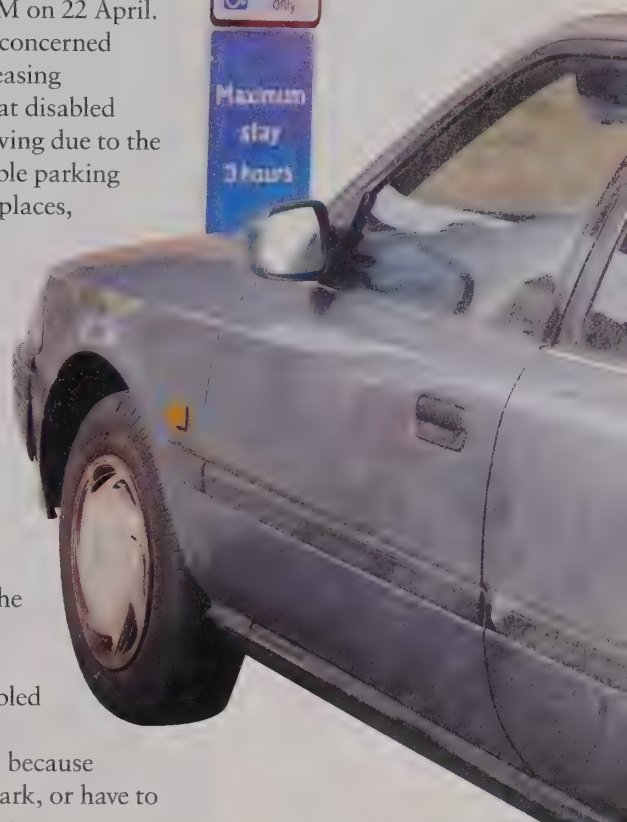
and in front of outpatient areas and A&E to increase the 40 spaces we already have."

Douglas Campbell, who is a member of Mobilise (formerly Disabled Drivers Association and Disabled Drivers Motoring Club) will raise the issue of parking at healthcare facilities at the Mobilise AGM on 22 April. He says he is concerned with the increasing difficulties that disabled people are having due to the lack of available parking and, in some places, high charges for parking.

Douglas wants the trustees to draw the attention of ministers, officials, NHS trusts and service providers to the parking problem.

When disabled people miss appointments because they cannot park, or have to

arrange unnecessary hospital transport, something is clearly wrong. Hopefully the new car park in Milton Keynes will go some way to relieving the situation. But not every hospital is gaining a new car park, and with the number of blue badge holders increasing as our population ages, hospitals have to consider how they can provide more disabled parking spaces for free.



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Film

The White Countess

Set in 1930's Shanghai, this sweeping drama serves up everything one expects from a Merchant/Ivory film: period costumes, lush cinematography, flawless foreign accents and a running time of over two hours.

The story begins with exiled Russian countess, Sofia (Natasha Richardson), who has been reduced to supporting her family as a taxi driver and prostitute. She casts her spell on a blind American ex-diplomat, Todd (Ralph Fiennes), who is embittered by

the state of the world after political violence has taken his family and his sight.

Todd senses everything that's good in Sofia and rescues her from a sordid lifestyle by making her the central attraction at his brand new nightclub, The White Countess.

The nightclub serves as an escape from painful memories and political turmoil brewing just outside its doors. Naturally this cannot last forever and eventually reality hits.

Sadly, the solid performances of Fiennes, Richardson and Vanessa and Lynn Redgrave are not enough to balance *Remains of the Day* novelist Kazuo Ishiguro's wobbly screenplay, which clanks through the



predictable twists and turns, baffling the viewer.

Despite the ripe ingredients of shared loss, a looming Japanese invasion and profound love, we are often left unmoved.

Although there are worthwhile moments, it might be best to leave this one until it hits Blockbuster.

Elizabeth Choppin

Theatre

Under Milk Wood



Dylan Thomas wrote *Under Milk Wood* for radio in 1954. It is a dark comedy based on characters from a mythical Welsh seaside village, played by six actors, and covers a night and day in the village.

The play requires few props or scenery and relies heavily on the actors' abilities to create the persona of the characters, especially the accents.

It is often described as a "play of voices" because it was originally performed on the radio and physical action was kept to a minimum.

Oxfordshire Touring Theatre Company (OTTC) has produced a version that includes one actor who is deaf and does not speak, and another who is blind.

Tim Gebbels, who is blind, unleashed a commanding performance with fantastic and



faultless accents. At various points in the play he would move around the set, subtly using the chairs and voices of the other actors for navigation.

David Ellington (pictured) who is deaf, used BSL signing, and his words were spoken by other actors. The signing added another level of interest to the performance.

The sound effects and prose conveyed the timescale and atmosphere perfectly.

I enjoyed the performance immensely and would prefer to see it with signing and animation. In fact, I wouldn't mind seeing this "play of voices" again.

● For venues and dates, tel: 01865 249 444, www.ottc.org.uk

Fred Walden

TV news

● It's good to see the soaps featuring disabled characters, especially as these programmes are viewed by up to half the population.

Ben Mitchell (played by Charlie Jones), who has a hearing impairment after having meningitis, has returned to *Eastenders**, following his mum Kathy's death in South Africa. This month sees tension and a possible custody battle between Ian and Ben's dad Phil.

Channel Four's teen soap *Hollyoaks*** has been following Cameron Clark's (Ben Gerrard) obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). The storyline demonstrates how the condition affects a person's ability to carry out daily tasks and has highlighted the ignorance that still persists of mental health problem mainly through some of the reactions of his housemates.

* Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 7.30 or 8pm on BBC1

** Monday to Friday at 6.30pm on Channel 4

● Channel Five's *Extraordinary People* series continues with *The Girl Who Makes Miracles* (pictured).

Audrey Santo, from Massachusetts, is regarded as a faith healer, having 'cured' people of ailments, although she's been

in a coma for twenty years. Not one for sceptics.

* 3 April, 9pm.



● Scope's oral history project *Speaking for Ourselves*, which records the life stories of people with cerebral palsy, will be the subject of an *Archive Hour* documentary on Radio 4, 8 April at 8pm. * Find out more at www.speakingforourselves.org.uk

● Jason Pegler of Chipmunka Publishing, which publishes books by and for people with mental health problems, took part in a BBC documentary being filmed last month as part of London Book Fair. Pegler's book *Curing Madness* was launched at the event. The documentary, which features famous people with mental health problems, is due to be aired in September.

* For more information see, www.chipmunka-publishing.com

● Thank you to Jane Shepherd, who has written our TV review for five years. In future we will be highlighting upcoming TV and radio programmes.

Could you adopt these children?

Timothy and Tiffany are full brother and sister. Nicholas is their half-brother. They have always lived together and been fostered since 2004.

They would love to be adopted together. But if we can't find a family they may have to be adopted by separate families.

Maybe you have the commitment to help them reach their full potential, recognising their individual needs.

All three children are sociable, energetic and attend mainstream school. Timothy and Nicholas have statements of special educational needs and have some communication and learning delay. Tiffany is doing well at school and loves sport. With a high level of supervision and consistent routine they are rewarding children to care for.



Timothy aged 7, Tiffany aged 5, Nicholas aged 4.

All three need an energetic family with one person at home full-time and no other children under 10.

If you would like to be considered as an adopter for these or other children

Contact: Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Family Placement Team, Guildhall One, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1EU

020 8 547 6042 famplacduty@rbk.kingston.gov.uk



What's on

Theatre

Graeae Theatre Company is touring with Sarah Kane's *Blasted* until 13 May. The play explores the horrors of war.

● For tour dates, tel: 020 7700 2455, www.graeae.org

Music

The Heroes Project is launching *Frogtastic*, a club night for people with learning difficulties. There will be a launch night at the Frog and Bucket in Manchester on 26 April. 7.30pm. From £2.50.

● Tel: 07946 424 075, email: theheroes@ntlworld.com

Dance

Touchdown Dance will perform *Closer* at Swindon Dance on 5 April. The show is a multi-sensory experience.

● Town Hall Studios, Swindon. Tel: 01793 463 210, www.touchdowndance.org.uk



Time to get equal

Equality in Higher Education

On 1 March, Scope's Parliamentary Affairs Officer Abigail Lock (left) joined panellists at the NUS's Parliamentary Lobby to debate 'How increasing market forces in education will affect the Government's aim of widening participation.' The discussion highlighted how an increase in tuition fees may put off more disabled students from applying to university.

60% of disabled young people not entering further or higher education believed they would not get the support they need. This shows that barriers are in place which deter disabled people from accessing further and higher education.

The thought of being thousands of pounds in debt with a reduced chance of paying off the debt is a deterrent to many disabled students.



Over 150 students were joined by politicians at the event in Parliament campaigning to keep the £3,000 cap on tuition fees. More information about the NUS and its campaign can be found at: www.nusonline.co.uk



Roddy Graham, Director of Leasedrive and Robin Davies from Scope agreeing to a programme of Disability Equality Training.

Equality through training

Scope's Diversity Works team is working hard to deliver Disability Equality Training across a range of business sectors and public services. The team has exceeded their targets and demand has led to a further series of seven seminars for the public sector and three seminars for the private sector.

Diversity Works Manager Paul Appleyard said: "We are delighted by the interest in Disability Equality training – it shows that businesses and public sector organisations are beginning to recognise how vital staff attitude is in their delivery of services to disabled customers." Venues include London, Wakefield and Birmingham.

For more details go to www.diversityworks.scope.org.uk or email robin.davies@scope.org.uk

TTGE Supports Leadership Recruitment

Scope's Leadership Recruitment Programme aims to break down barriers to graduate employment for disabled people.

Nikitha Narayan and Mitan Sachdev joined the scheme last September and have gone on to paid work placements at Lehman Brothers and PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC).

More recently Nikitha who has a visual impairment has had her contract re-newed and Mitan has secured a place on PWC's own Graduate Scheme.

Mitan who has dyslexia says: "I have been given a new lease of life. This opportunity has given me the belief that my disability is something that will not stop me from being successful."

Leadership Recruitment is a partnership between Scope and national employers providing paid work placements. Up to 50 disabled people each year will be offered a one-year placement and development training.

If you think you are ready for the challenge, email graduates@scope.org.uk

www.timetogetequal.org.uk

For information on the Time to Get Equal campaign email: equality.campaign@scope.org.uk

Dear Rachel

● love and loneliness ● personal problems ● advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Help with gardening

My husband and I are both elderly and severely disabled. We cannot manage the garden anymore and cannot afford to pay anyone to come in. Can anyone help?
Jane, Portsmouth

I am sorry to hear that you and your husband are having difficulty managing your garden.

Some local councils will be able to put you in touch with a gardening service, so it would be worth contacting them.

Most areas also have a local volunteer bureau or centre and they may be able to put you in touch with volunteers.

You could also contact Thrive, a charity which gives advice on making gardening easier for disabled and older people. I hope you are able to enjoy your garden again very soon.

● Thrive, tel: 0118 9885688, www.thrive.org.uk

● Volunteering England (volunteer centres), tel: 08453 056 979, www.volunteering.org.uk

Speeding fine

I was recently caught by speed cameras while travelling at 40 miles per hour in a 30 mile per hour zone. As a disabled driver, I

am worried about the impact this will have on my insurance. I explained my circumstances to the court and said I wished to appeal my fine, but to no avail. I have reason to believe that the speed cameras were faulty.
Ali, by email

I understand your concern. However, your disability does not mean that you are exempt from penalties for speeding.

If the speed cameras can be proved faulty, then you may be able to argue that your penalties should be waived because it cannot be proved you were speeding. You would do this by writing to the court.

If however you were speeding, arguing for leniency on disability grounds would probably be fruitless.

Charged for direct debit

I am registered blind and have diabetes. I pay for my gas by card pre-payment meter, but recently asked for my payments to be changed to direct debit. I was told by British Gas that it would cost £120 to change. I am very worried as the cost of gas sometimes means I have to choose between eating or heating the house.

William, by email

If you are on a limited income your local social services can help by making sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to.

In respect of British Gas: if your disability makes it difficult for you to use a card payment meter, and you need an alternative form of payment, British Gas may be discriminating against you by charging a fee for it to be altered. They should explain why a charge is necessary.

If you contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau they can support you in talking to British Gas and ensure that you are treated fairly.

● National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, tel: 020 7833 2181, www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Internet access

My son lives in a residential home and relies heavily on the internet. We have never managed to get a broadband connection in his room to work properly and technicians have had no explanation. This has proved expensive as we have been "locked-in" to contracts before installation.
Pat, by email

Ripped off on adaptations

I have a "drive from a wheelchair" transit van and believe I have been overcharged by my adaptations company for repairs. I was recently charged £900, £450 of which was their travel costs for three journeys to my home. Despite being aware that my vehicle has specialised steering, on one visit they turned up and said they would not be able to drive it away because of the steering. They have also come without the correct tools and left my vehicle with a broken gear change, when it worked correctly prior to their intervention. Can they treat me like this and who can I complain to?

Mike, by email

This is a clear case of unfair treatment and I believe the company is breaching the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The act prohibits companies from giving disabled people less favourable treatment than non-disabled people. It also requires them to make "reasonable adjustments" in offering services, to ensure fair treatment. The cost of any such adjustment may not be passed on to the disabled person.

It is unreasonable to charge you so much for collecting your vehicle, because your disability means that this is the only option available to you.

It is particularly unfair since you explained about the specialised steering system prior to them coming.

I suggest that you contact the Disability Rights Commission. You might also like to bring this incident to the attention of the Disabled Drivers' Association, to see if they have similar experiences.

Consumer Direct may be interested in what you have to say. They are a national consumer advice service, supported by the DTI, and can advise you on making a complaint about this company if that is what you wish to do.

● Consumer Direct, tel: 08454 04 05 06,

www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

● Disability Rights Commission, tel: 08457 622 633, www.drc-gb.org

● Disabled Drivers' Association, tel: 0870 770 3333, www.dda.org.uk

I can see no reason why broadband in a community setting, particularly if it is only in one room, should be any more problematic than a connection in a single house.

You need someone other than a broadband provider to assess the feasibility of a connection in your son's room.

I suggest that you contact AbilityNet. This is an organisation that specialises in assistive technology solutions for disabled people and will be familiar with this issue. They will be able to advise you impartially as to the best way forward.

● AbilityNet, tel: 01926 312 847, www.abilitynet.org.uk



Help at the end of the phone

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.

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ASK THE READERS

I have severe cerebral palsy (CP) and need total care but I live life to the full. I'm not against labels, but I object to assumptions that severe physical disabilities affect learning capabilities. Recently I attended a talk on coping with disability. Having had CP since birth it was not useful, but the speaker assumed I didn't like it because I had learning difficulties. How can I convince people there is a distinction?

Demonstrate your ability

Severe CP affects the way some of us communicate, either by spoken or written word. The problem is that some individuals experience these difficulties because of a genuine learning difficulty.

If you attended the meeting without a carer or a communication aid, and the speaker was a complete stranger, how were they to know your abilities, experiences or opinions?

They may only have dealt with people with CP who also had learning difficulties.

If you attend future meetings do some preparation. Write down (or tell someone) your experience and some questions you think may be relevant.

By doing so you will, hopefully, demonstrate that it is possible to have severe CP without necessarily having a learning difficulty.
Chris Channon

Write it all down

However your CP affects you, it is very clear from your email that you are articulate.

If you are concerned that your speech and posture might give people the impression that you have learning difficulties, then you could prepare a written comment asking people not to assume that you have learning difficulties; you can make it as detailed or brief as you wish.

Then, depending on the situation and your circumstances, you can either leave the statement in clear view for people to read, or give it to people to read for themselves as and when it feels appropriate.
Rachel Wilson

Let them be fools

I have fibromyalgia which affects my speech and ability to remember words. People assume I suffer from more than just physical problems and talk



slowly or talk down to me.

When things like this happen to you, just say something like: "Did you get CP mixed up with some other condition that causes learning difficulties? Never mind, you're not the first to get confused." You could always make a short comment explaining what CP actually is or just leave them to get it wrong and look silly in front of others.
Crystal Cavies

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

"I am visually impaired. I use SuperNova and a Magnilink. I have a PA qualification, I just passed a certificate in management studies with distinction and I speak fluent French, but I cannot find a job that will pay me a decent wage. What should I do?"

Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask the readers" at the usual address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



SIMON SAYS

Few people are likely to gain the satisfaction they crave from sex workers

Only a small number of disabled people are likely to gain anything from using sex workers. However, it seems to generate a disproportionate number of letters.

If you want to use a prostitute then recognise this is not an intimate relationship.

Visiting a sex worker is a commercial service. It can be a good or bad experience and you need to take steps to ensure your safety and the best exchange for your money.

Some basic points:

- Check with the person by phone first. Ensure they are OK with your access needs. You may need help dressing and undressing. You might require more time and must expect to pay for this.
- Be clear about your expectations and do not expect it to solve all your problems.
- Practice safer sex.

- Treat the sex worker with respect.
- Do not expect a relationship or to fall in love.
- Do not expect to get something for nothing but equally never pay more than agreed prior to your visit. In London you can pay upwards of £70 per half hour. Whilst it can be less elsewhere, a good service will cost you.
- Prostitution is not illegal, as long as only one person works in the premises. It is, however, illegal to ask your PA to get and pay for a prostitute for you as they would be guilty of procurement.

Whilst this is a complex and controversial area it can be of partial help to a few people. Ultimately though, if this is our only choice, it effectively highlights our sexual exclusion.

For service reviews and listings: www.punternet.com
Simon Parritt is a chartered counselling psychologist.

Send your relationship questions to "Simon says" at the usual postal address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

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Renault Kangoo 1.2 Petrol	PN04 KBX	Green	3 Seats, Ramp	12,863	9,995
Renault Kangoo 1.6 Petrol Auto	RX05 EEA	Red	3 Seats, Ramp, Air Con, CD, PAS, E/Mirrors	4,893	11,595
Renault Kangoo 1.6 Petrol Auto	RK53 DCX	Blue	3 Seats, Ramp, ABS, C/L, PAS	5,587	9,595
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For further information, FREE Brochure pack or to arrange a demonstration please contact Phillip Beecham, Mike Jones, Simon Fletcher or David Connor (New Versa Enquiries), Phil Hawkins (Used Versa Specialist).

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What's On

Motability Roadshow Scotland will be at the Royal Highland Centre near Edinburgh on 5-6 April. The event will be opened by Tanni Grey Thompson, who will also take part in the 'sports spectacular' event. Try out a range of adapted vehicles and get advice on mobility aids. Tel: 0845 241 0390, www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

Deaf Day 2006 is on 22 April. The City Lit Centre for Deaf People is holding a tenth anniversary event at the

centre in London. From £30. Tel: 020 7492 2720, *textphone*: 020 7492 2746, *email*: deafday@citylit.ac.uk

MS Life will be at GMEX in Manchester from 22-23 April. The multiple sclerosis convention will include workshops, demonstrations and a tribute to comedian Richard Pryor. Tel: 020 8438 0809, www.msconvention.org.uk

There will be an open day at **Portobello Green fitness club**

on 25 April, for disabled people of all levels of fitness. There is accessible equipment and discounts are available. *Free*. Tel: 020 8960 2221, www.westway.org

Naidex 2006 will be at the NEC in Birmingham from 25-27 April. The event will showcase the latest products and innovations, and will include seminars and awards. Tel: 0870 429 4428, *register online at*: www.naidex.co.uk

Publications

The British Standards Institution (BSI), in association with the Disability Rights Commission, has produced a guide on good practice in commissioning accessible websites. £30. Available in various formats BSI: tel: 020 8996 9001, *email*: orders@bsi-global.com

The Albinism Fellowship has published *Real Lives: Personal and Photographic Perspectives on Albinism*, which is a photographic account of the

lives of 12 people with albinism. £20. Tel: 01282 771 900, www.albinism.org.uk

Learning Disability Wales has produced a CD-Rom titled *Having a Say*, a guide to including people with learning difficulties in the planning of services. Tel: 02920 492 443, www.learningdisabilitywales.org.uk

Laurence Arnold, who is autistic, has produced a DVD titled *Whichever Way You Look at it, it's Still Autism*.

£19.99. Available from the **National Autistic Society (NAS)**. Tel: 020 7833 2299, www.nas.org.uk, www.shiningcityvisions.com

Communication Matters has produced a DVD titled *The Power of Communication*, which gives information on using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and the variety of communication aids available. £15. Tel: 0845 456 8211, www.communicationmatters.org.uk

Have a look at our website for the latest news, features, campaign updates, sports and arts. There are also sections on motoring, travel and equipment. Get involved in our forums and Have Your Say sections. Check out the For Sale section for used wheelchairs, scooters and cars – many pictured – and our extensive online holiday directory, again with pictures. You can also find a penpal, register for our monthly email newsletter and enter exclusive online competitions. See www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Websites

Foundations, the national co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs), has an online directory of agencies, aimed at helping people find out about and contact services in their local area. HIAs assist disabled homeowners in repairing, improving, maintaining and adapting their homes. See www.foundations.uk.com

The International Paralympic Committee has launched a new global internet television channel, showing Paralympic sport events. See www.paralympicsport.tv

Courses

Disabled Living, based in Manchester, is holding a number of day courses in April on moving, handling and hoists. £5. For more information, tel: 0870 777 4714, www.disabledliving.co.uk

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities and the **Association for Real Change** are holding workshops in Birmingham on 4 April and London on 6 April, aimed at meeting the needs of people with learning difficulties from minority ethnic communities. £90, free for people with learning difficulties and their supporters. Tel: 01246 555 043, www.learningdisabilities.org.uk, www.arcuk.org.uk

Wanted

UK Skills is inviting disability organisations and disabled people who have achieved success through training to enter the 2006 National Training Awards. Deadline: 28 April. Tel: 0800 917 7337, www.nationaltrainingawards.com

The Mobility Roadshow's Ready Willing and Mobile 2006 competition is calling for bright ideas from young people between seven and 14 years old to help disabled children integrate at school, at home and at play. Prizes include equipment, a camera, books and an activity weekend with the Calvert Trust. There will be a prize-giving ceremony at the Mobility Roadshow on 8 June, presented by Tanni Grey Thompson. Deadline: 30 April. Tel: 0870 770 3222, www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE) is looking for supporters to help celebrate National Epilepsy Week (14-20 May) through fundraising events and spreading awareness of the condition. Tel: 01342 832 243, www.ncype.org.uk

BARNET
LONDON BOROUGH

London Borough of Barnet are looking for an adoptive family for



SAFIYA (D.O.B. 04/02/04)

Safiya is the youngest of 5 siblings, although the plan is for her to be placed separately in an adoptive family. She has been with the same foster care since birth. Her foster carer, with whom she has found a strong and loving bond, describes her as an adorable, contented and responsive toddler, who hardly ever cries and who is a pleasure to care for.

Ethnicity, Race, Culture and Religion

Safiya's mother is Ethiopian and it is believed that her birth father is African / Sudanese. Her birth mother has not disclosed his identity. The family muslim and Arab speaking as well as English.

Health Information

Safiya is a child with Down's Syndrome. She is having monthly physiotherapy sessions and weekly hydrotherapy sessions. She is short sighted and will need glasses. She is vocalising and sitting well and is gaining weight. She reaches out towards things and is able to hold items and is generally making very good developmental progress.

Contact

Safiya has had no contact with her birth mother for some months and letter box contact is envisaged post adoption. She has contact with her siblings and the plan is for her to have twice yearly contact with them.

Legal situation

Safiya is subject to a full Care order under Section 38 of the Children Act, 1989.

Allowances available

The adoptive family may qualify for adoption support payments.

Family required

Safiya needs a family who have an understanding of Down's Syndrome and can accept the uncertainties in her development. Also, a priority is to place her in a family who reflect her ethnic background or have close links to the black community.

If you and your family meet these criteria and you would like to hear more about Safiya, please contact:

Nina Shepherd, The Adoption Team, London Borough of Barnet,
6th Floor Barnet House, 1255 High Road, London N20 0EJ.

Tel: 020 83595708.

Email: nina.shepherd@barnet.gov.uk



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1450mm (57") interior headroom
Converted floor length 1550mm (61")



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Volkswagen Sharan

1498mm (59") interior headroom
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Fiat Multipla

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Converted floor length 1270mm (50")



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• Cars/vans/caravans

VAUXHALL ASTRA ESTATE 1.6, auto, push/pull hand controls, 41k miles, T reg, MOT expires August. Pas, e/windows, sunroof, only 2 owners from new, in excellent order, £2,995 ono. Tel: 01252 650382 (Guildford area).

RICON 6-WAY power seat adjuster assists transfer to and from wheelchair. Fitted in ex-Ford Transit, moves passenger or driver's seat for and aft 24 inches, up and down 9 inches, rotates 90 degrees. Cost £900, any reasonable offer will be considered. Tel: 0161 766 5985 (Bury, Lancs).

MERCEDES VITO 2.1, Sept 2004, 5 doors, auto, diesel, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, air con, CD player. Room for 2 wheelchairs via hydraulic lift, seats 8 including driver. Only one owner from new, 2,800 miles. Cost £26,000 new, asking £18,000 ono. Tel: 020 8858 4161 (S. London).

CHRYSLER VOYAGER 3.3, 1996, 79k miles, auto, sunroof, e/windows, zero effort steering, air con, left hand drive. IMS wheelchair conversion, ramp, drive from wheelchair. Full MOT, only one owner from new and in good condition. £6,500 ono. Tel: 020 8740 4815 (West London).

MERCEDES VITO 108 CDI 2 litre diesel, manual, 2002, black metallic, removable front seat to enable wheelchair user to sit next to driver, Ricon rear entry lift, air con, Kenwood CD/Radio, twin sunroofs, 22k miles, 12 months' MOT, Excellent condition, £11,000. Tel: 01772 861427 or email Paulsluggerp@aol.com

RENAULT TRAFIC 1994. Ratcliff hydraulic tail lift. Sunroof. PAS. Takes 3 wheelchairs, driver & 2 passengers. 54K miles. 12 months MOT. Tax May. £3,000. Full details from Mick 01634 291479 (Medway Kent) or email micky.john@btinternet.com

NISSAN SERENA 1993, L reg with Brotherwood conversion, 75,700 miles. Rear lowered floor with lightweight ramp. Wheelchair passenger + driver+ 4/5 passengers. 11 months MOT. 1 previous owner. Good reliable condition. £3,500 ono. New car forces sale. Tel: 01375 678828 or craig@d-everest.freemove.co.uk

PLYMOUTH VOYAGER 2.5 van, 1994, auto with hand controls, side entrance with remote control sliding doors and automatic fold down ramp for wheelchair access. Carries a maximum of 5 including wheelchair. E/windows and e/mirrors, 85k miles, full MOT, only 2 owners from new. £3,500 ono. Tel: 01708 379109 (Romford).

TOYOTA PREVIA CDX 2.4, auto, 2001, 16k miles, Sat nav, pas, ABS, EBD, climate/cruise control, parking sensors, twin sunroofs, CD player, privacy glass. Wheelchair Access ramp (Automotive Group) – 5 seats plus wheelchair. In excellent condition, MOT until November, only one owner from new, £13,200. Tel: 01908 674166 (Milton Keynes) or email: davidaslater@ukonline.co.uk

VW SHARAN CARAT 2.0, auto, 1997 with Brotherwood conversion. 38k miles, MOT until August. Good Condition, fsh. £5,000 ono. Tel 020 8947 5030 or colinshurrock@btinternet.com

PEUGEOT BOXER 2.4 motorcaravan, 1998 (R reg) with hydraulic wheelchair lift at rear. Captain's swivel seat for front passenger. Professional conversion by Leisuredrive completed in Dec 2005. 2 berth (good sized single beds), mains hook up, 3 way fridge, 2 ring hob, grill, microwave, tv/dvd combi and wheelchair charging point. Lifelong conversion guarantee, full 12 months' MOT, 6 months' road tax, only 54k miles and 2 owners from new, fsh. £10,750 ono. Tel: 0161 749 7746 (Manchester) or mobile: 07979 220552.

• Wheelchairs/scooters

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Four posts in Bolivia/Palestine which require a background in project management, policy development and training, together with experience related to disability rights and strong skills in communication, problem solving and patience. Disabled candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

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Whilst NGOs and associations of disabled people are slowly emerging in Bolivia, much support is needed. As **institutional strengthener CONALPEDIS** based in La Paz, you will work with the National Committee of Disabled People, contributing to strategic planning, new projects and networking; as **institutional strengthener CODEPEDIS Sucre**, your role with this regional committee will include awareness raising in city and rural areas, and establishing links with grassroots organisations.

General Union of Disabled Palestinians
The GUDP was founded in the early 1980s and raises awareness of disabled peoples' rights, challenges attitudes within society and lobbies government. Working with GUDP board members and volunteers, as **central office capacity builder** you will help develop strategic planning and organisational policies and procedures; as **branch office capacity builder**, you will work on strategies for raising funds and advocacy campaigns. Both posts are based in Ramallah.

How to apply: job description and application form available from www.international-service.org.uk or applications@international-service.org.uk or International Service, Hunter House, 57 Goodramgate, York YO1 7FX, Tel: + 44 (0)1904 647799.

Please let us know if you would like the information in a specific format.

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PEUGEOT EXPERT 1.9 LTR DIESEL 2001, Blue, Very good Condition, 31,000 miles, 5 door, Electric reels, Electric Winch, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Service History. **£8,750**

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VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER SWB 2.5 TDI TURBO DIESEL Date first registered: 25/11/1998, Green, 4 seats, 42,000 miles, Automatic Transmission, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Electric Winch, Lowering rear air suspension, Power Steering, Rear Saloon Heater, Side load door, Single front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£6,800**

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2004 54	Fiat Doblo 1.3JTD Active, Blue, Wheelchair position plus 2 passengers & fixed ramp. Winch.	£11,495
2001 51	Vauxhall Zafira Elegance 1.8 Auto Gowrings Lowered floor conversion	£14,995
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2002 02	Peugeot Expert 1.9D, White, New Lowered floor conversion, 3 passenger seats	£12,250
2001 Y	VW Transporter SWB 1.9TD, Red, Wheelchair position and fixed ramp, 4 passenger seats.	£7995
1999 T	Toyota Hiace 2.5D, Blue, Wheelchair position & fixed ramp. 3 Passenger seats.	£6995
1996 P	Fiat Fiorino 1.4P, Red, Lowered floor wheelchair position with fixed ramp, 3 passengers seats.	£2995
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RENAULT KANGOO AUTHENTIQUE 1.2 with wheelchair access and seats for 3. Registered 52 '02. Vehicle comes with a full service history from the Motability fleet having had one owner from new. 37k miles and has just had a full service and pre delivery inspection, MOT until September. The vehicle is very clean inside and out and comes, comprehensive parts and labour warranty. Finance and full dealer facilities are available, including part exchange. **Only, £6,250.**

CITROEN DISPATCH ESTATE 1.9D with wheelchair access and seats for 4. Registered W' 00. Fsh, from the Motability fleet having had one owner from new. 67k miles and has just had a full service and pre delivery inspection, MOT until June but this can be renewed at the time of sale for no extra cost. The vehicle is very clean inside and out and comes with a comprehensive parts and labour warranty. Finance and full dealer facilities are available, including part exchange. **Only £5,350.**

Tel: 01737 557756 for further details or email bob@paavansales.co.uk for more pictures. **TRADE**

WANTED!

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

All Makes and Models considered, finance settled
Ring: 0121 550 8844
markflavell.wamco@fsmail.net
www.twamco.co.uk

Powerchairs Mobility Consultants
New and Nearly New, Electric Wheelchairs, 3 and 4 Wheel Scooters.
All models wanted and for sale.
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0800 074 6834
All major credit cards accepted

DISCLAIMER


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DEADLINE

DN Extra April 2006 published 8 April. Classified deadlines: Booking and copy: 29 March.

Disability Now May 2006 published 29 April. Classified deadlines: Booking: 13 April. Copy: 18 April.

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 46)



A NATIONAL VOICE FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR INCLUSION IN RECREATION AND LEISURE

YOUNG PEOPLE'S INCLUSION NETWORK: NATIONAL TEAM

Kids has received 3-year funding under the Big Lottery Young People's Fund for this exciting new project with disabled young people around England. The national team will work with Kids projects in five regions to set up new youth groups, who will assess their favourite leisure activities and establish a national on-line network to devise and promote advice on inclusive leisure.

Regional Network Development Officer:

London (ref: YP10/06) Salary £27,050pa (inc London weighting)


Based at Kids regional office in Central London, your excellent communication skills will support you in establishing and facilitating the region's Young People's Inclusion Network group. You will have experience of youth advocacy and project development work, of group facilitation and consultation with young people. Efficient in programme implementation and monitoring, you have worked with disabled young people and have a high level of disability awareness. This is a full time post.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: Midday 3 April 2006


Assessment and interviews will be held in Central London on Friday 7 April 2006

To receive full details and an application pack please email: yp-in@kids.org.uk QUOTING THE REF. No, or send a large SAE to: YP-in, Kids, 49 Mecklenburgh Square, London WC1N 2NY (please state preferred format). Previous applicants need not apply.

Kids strives to be an equal opportunities employer. All disabled people who meet the person specification will be offered an interview.



Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Big Lottery Fund



• Holidays (Cont'd pg 44)

PAIGNTON, DEVON

Six Berth wheelchair accessible caravan within a mile of the beach. Site facilities include club, indoor and outdoor pools, sauna, steam room, free wheelchair loan, children's play area.

Tel. Devon ASBAH on 01803 522256 – www.dasbah.co.uk

The Algarve, Portugal

Small hotel owned and run by English family. Home from home. Happy and friendly. Home cooked food. Diets catered for. All bedrooms en-suite. Our own swimming pool and grass bowling green. Golfing bookings can be made. We are fully equipped for wheelchair users, their families and friends. Met at Faro airport. For brochures and flights with A.T.O.L. agents, tel UK: 01 895 471 631, tel: 00 351 289 396589, fax: 00 351 289 394924. www.emmets-ville.co.uk



Katalan Travels Ltd
01494 580816

Holiday Services for People with Disabilities

Summer & Winter Holidays

- Supported Holidays
- Tailor made Holidays
- Equipment Hire in Resort

Also Agents for: "Holiday taxis", pre-booked at destination airport. "Destination Care" - Have your own rep in resort.

Helping you find the Holiday you Deserve

www.katalantravels.com
katalan.travels@ntiworld.com

Ask us about "Purple Parking" Meet & Greet parking scheme AT SELECTED AIRPORTS



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we make the holiday, you make the holiday...

- Do YOU want to go on HOLIDAY?
- Do YOU need SUPPORT?
- Do YOU want to feel confident about ACCESSIBILITY?
- Do YOU need ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT from the UK?
- Do YOU need any EQUIPMENT during your stay?

We are a business based in Brittany, France that ensures you can feel CONFIDENT about your next holiday. By offering accessible accommodation, accessible transport and support workers, you can have a relaxing tailor made holiday.



Brittany Cottage to let.

Adapted for wheelchair use.

Good access to beaches.

Sleeps up to 6.

Details **C. Hodgson.**

Tel (01924) 499220.

www.brimartravel.co.uk

Dordogne – SW France

Two stunning wheelchair accessible properties in the idyllic rural setting of Perigord Vert.

The Grande Maison sleeps up to 10, the Petite Maison up to 5.

Contact **Ed Passant** on 01233 731097 or ed@accessholidays.com

www.accessholidays.com


PENROSE BURDEN NORTH CORNWALL "Holiday Care Award Winners"

Holiday Cottages designed for wheelchair users and their families. Rural setting with superb views. Dogs welcome. Wood burning stoves and daily meal service.

Please ring or write for colour brochure.

R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Breward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617

www.penroseburden.co.uk



Being disabled should create no barriers, so if you possess the skills and experience sought by numerous employers, we're keen to help you find the job that's right for you through our network of employment partners. Working on behalf of a number of employers throughout the UK who see the skills you can offer as a genuine asset to their organisation, we have the following exciting career opportunities for disabled people keen to live an independent life and reach their potential:

Call Centre Opportunities

Immediate! Training Sector – Salford Quays, Manchester (Feb & March) Junior roles (£12,500) Senior roles (£14,500)

Retail Industry – Leicester (c £12,000+)

Health Insurance – Tunbridge Wells c. £14,500 Salford Quays, Manchester

Financial – Brighton, Southend, Leeds, Sheffield, Leicester, Hemel Hempstead, Southampton, Swansea, Newport – c. £14,000

Skills Required

Strong customer focus, good communication (both written and verbal), computer literacy, administration, problem solving, decision making

Other Opportunities Available

Hotel based opportunities in Manchester, Birmingham and Brighton

Pharmacist vacancies – nationwide – Salaries from £25-£42k

Variety of roles in Retail DIY environment in London, Yeovil, Basingstoke, Salisbury, Wednesbury, Luton

Administration Roles for Central Government office – London

Our partners have opportunities at various levels and can also offer both full and part time permanent employment with competitive packages.

If you are interested in these positions and would like to be considered, regardless of your disability (or would like to see if we can help you find employment in any other area or sector), please send your C.V. and a covering letter including details of the role and location which interests you, your salary expectations, plus details of your disability and how you have overcome any challenges in the workplace. Also, please indicate clearly whether you are currently in work/full time education/unemployed and seeking work or in danger of losing your current job due to your disability.

Please email to: employment.support@scope.org.uk or post to: Scope's Employment Service, Suite 1a, King's Hall, St Ives Business Park, Parsons Green, St Ives PE27 4WY or tel: 01480 309615, quoting ref: DN/0306.


Scope's Employment Service is involved in assisting disabled people into and remaining in work. To find out more about the services we provide, visit our website: www.scope.org.uk/work

For disabled people achieving equality

• Course (Cont'd pg 45)

The Tavistock and Portman

NHS Trust



The Tavistock Clinic Training Programmes

Psychodynamic Approaches to Working with People with Learning Disabilities (Ref. D5)

There is a growing interest in psychodynamic work with people with learning disabilities, but as yet there are few formal courses available to qualified professionals who work in this field. This course aims to bridge this gap and provide a forum for professionals who have some experience in the field, and who wish to further their specialism. The course will draw on relevant psychodynamic theory applied across the life span, and will include a focus on the application of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic ideas to learning disabilities.

This course aims to provide professionals working with children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities:

- a grounding in psychodynamic theory as applied to people with learning disabilities
- a forum for exploring psychotherapeutic approaches to working with people with learning disabilities
- the opportunity to develop therapeutic and observational skills

For further information please contact:

Directorate of Training and Postgraduate Education

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 7447 3722

Fax: 020 7447 3837

academic@tavi-port.org

A copy of the academic prospectus 2006-2007 is available on request or visit www.tavi-port.org

Brittany Cottage to let.

Adapted for wheelchair use.

Good access to beaches.

Sleeps up to 6.

Details **C. Hodgson.**

Tel (01924) 499220.

www.brimartravel.co.uk

Dordogne – SW France

Two stunning wheelchair accessible properties in the idyllic rural setting of Perigord Vert.

The Grande Maison sleeps up to 10, the Petite Maison up to 5.

Contact **Ed Passant** on 01233 731097 or ed@accessholidays.com

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Please ring or write for colour brochure.

R&N Hall, Penrose Burden, St Breward, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4LZ. Telephone Bodmin (01208) 850277 or 850617

www.penroseburden.co.uk

• Recruitment (on page 40 to 46)

Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser. Disability Employment Advisers are based in Jobcentre Plus offices and Jobcentres and offer a wide range of advice and support. They can help you find a job, or stay in work if you are already employed.

The specialist service that Disability Employment Advisers provide, includes:

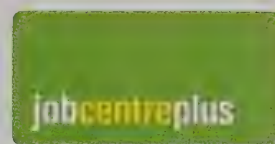
- advice on finding and keeping a job
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice to employers on employing disabled people.

Find out what additional help you can get by visiting our website.

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Jobseeker Direct: 0845 6060 234

Textphone: 0845 6055 255



Including Jobcentres and social security offices

Make your next role as important as ours.

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

We offer opportunities in our headquarters in London and East Kilbride – but also in many developing countries, with staff based in DFID offices plus British Embassies and High Commissions around the world. We have roles for leaders; professionals; specialists; managers; graduates and administrators.

DFID is an equal opportunities employer and selection is on merit. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. We will make any reasonable adjustments should they be required. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



DFID

Department for International Development

www.dfid.gov.uk

Transportforall

Strategic Training Officer

28 hrs pw. Salary: SO1 £26187, pro rata
+ 12.% pension contribution

Transport for All is an organisation of disabled people offering information, advice and advocacy about accessible transport issues across London.

We have 2 years' guaranteed funding for a Strategic Training Officer to develop a programme offering self-assertion and strategic thinking skills to disabled people.

You will have experience in a training environment, a high degree of self-organisation, and experience of working with disabled people.

We are Positive about Disability; disabled people who meet the essential requirements guaranteed an interview.

Application forms from: contactus@transportforall.com
or phone 020 7737 2339.

Closing date: 7th April 2006

PUMA BOOSTER ELECTRIC wheelchair with right hand joystick, electrically adjustable arm rest, foot rest and seat recline. It has new batteries (complete with charger), new puncture proof tyres and has been fully serviced. Cost £7,500, asking £750 ono. Tel: 01273 843340 (W. Sussex).

PRIDE JAZZY 1120 electric wheelchair rise/lower feature, fully serviced. Vgc, cost £2,500, will accept £975 ono + Echo 2000 s/p wheelchair, quick release wheels, vgc, £90 ono. Tel: 01766 780784.

HORIZON MOBILITY SAXON 4x4 wheel electric scooter with 2 brand new batteries. Front basket, front and rear lights, indicators. In good condition, only one owner from new and serviced regularly by manufacturers. £1,000 ono. Tel: 07881 431696 (London).

SHOPRIDER ELECTRIC SCOOTER with charger. We are selling my father's scooter. Two years old. A lovely red and in near perfect condition, road ready with indicators and lights. Range 12 miles, Cost new £2,200, asking £1,300. Ring 020 8455 7840 (wheelchair situated in East Sussex, near Lewes).

SHOPRIDER SPRINTER 4-WHEEL full size red mobility scooter with charger. Excellent condition, very little use. recently fitted brand new batteries. Max speed 8 mph with lights, horn, basket and weatherproof canopy. Can be easily dismantled for transport in vehicle. Willing to show scooter to prospective buyers, £990 ono. Tel 01423 886109.

QUICKIE REVOLUTION (LIGHTWEIGHT) folding frame ridged chair). Dark Green metallic, 16" x 16" seat with angle adjustable, folding backrest, frame is fully adjustable. 24" sports quick release wheels with new puncture proof tyres. This is an amazing chair that folds up so small and compact it fits almost everywhere. In Good condition and has little use – £450 ono. Tel: 0774 870 2281 or email adc_ceu@hotmail.com

5 FOOT (150 CM) aluminium telescopic ramps suitable for electric wheelchair or 4-wheel scooter. For sale at £250 ono P&P £10.00. Tel: 01912814703 or E-mail: petermillwood@yahoo.co.uk

PORTABLE FOLDING ELECTRIC hoist to allow transfer from wheelchair whilst on holiday. Tel: 01522 752707 (Lincoln). WANTED

• Household & Personal Services

A WALK-IN HYDROTHERAPY Spa bath system (Premier baths) 49 x 26 inches. Door on side, moulded seat. Shower unit, plus toilet and basin in champagne colour to match. Removed to revamp bathroom and in storage. Cost £2,000 2 years ago, asking £500 ono. Further details, tel Miss Cooke: 01424 213268 (Bexhill-on-Sea).

• Property for sale

DERBYSHIRE – MODERN FULLY wheelchair accessible 3 bedroom detached bungalow. En-suite level access shower + additional family bathroom. Spacious lounge. Kitchen/diner. Garage. Wheelchair access to attractive garden & block paved patio area. Convenient for all local services & access to M1 J30. £174,995. Tel: 01246 280397. www.accessible-property.org.uk

FULLY WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE 5 bedroom family home in Flitwick, Bedfordshire. Through floor lift, bath lift and ceiling hoist plus other. Needs to be viewed to be appreciated. Garage with electric door. Established garden. Within 5 minutes of junction 12 of the M1 & walking distance of Thameslink Rail Station, c.45 minutes into London. Accessible schools in vicinity. £399,995. Tel: 01525713880 or caroline.kitcher@tesco.net

Cont'd pg 45

INDEPENDENT LIVING ALTERNATIVES (ILA)

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Need help finding
Personal Assistants (PAs)?

Personal Assistance Services
can provide you with PAs to
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Why choose us?

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- Over 16 years experience •
- Expanding register of PAs •
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- Information and advice on all aspects of PA recruitment •



PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES

ILA, Trafalgar House, Grenville Place, London NW7 3SA, Tel: 020 8906 9265 Fax: 020 8959 1910
Email: PAservices@ILAnet.co.uk
Website: www.ILAnet.co.uk Charity No. 802198

• Services



New look and new products

Enable Select is a leading online disability shop offering products which can not be found elsewhere. From adult bibs and feeding aprons with sleeves to swimming jackets, hats and verruca socks. Now includes swimming nappies and plastic pants for all ages.

PLUS *NOW* 10% DISCOUNT FOR ALL DN READERS

Website: www.enableenterprises.com/select
Email: select@enableenterprises.com

Tel: 0800 358 8484

Meeting the needs of your disability NOW!

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• Recruitment (on page 40 to 46)



London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG)

LOCOG's vision is to stage inspirational Games that capture the imagination of young people around the world and leave a lasting legacy.

LOCOG's Sports Department is recruiting a Paralympic Sports Co-ordinator

Job Description:

The London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) has been established as the organisation that will plan and stage the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Olympic Games comprises of 26 sports and takes place from 27th July until 9th August. The Paralympic Games comprises of 19 sports and takes place 17 days after the Closing ceremony for the Olympic Games.

London 2012 has operated an inclusive policy from day one of its Bid and both the Paralympic and Olympic games will be run to the same high standards with the focus on the athletes and sit within the Sports Departments.

Relationships have to be formed with the National and International governing bodies for each sport and each of the venues has to have detailed overlay plans drawn up that comply with the sporting requirements of the appropriate governing body.

The successful person will be responsible for coordinating the strategic plan for Paralympic sports and work with the other members of the Sports team to ensure that all plans for the Olympic and Paralympic Games are fully coordinated.

Key Responsibilities/accountabilities:

- To assess the overall sports concept for the Paralympic games and develop the venue strategy
- To determine Paralympic games time training venue strategy
- To provide technical input for the preparation camp guide for all teams

- To liaise closely with the Sports team to ensure a coordinated approach
- To develop relationships with National and International Governing Bodies
- To work with other functional areas to develop operational plan for all sports
- Compile sports dossiers on all 18 sports
- To prepare external presentations for the Paralympics
- To attend external meetings on behalf of LOCOG
- To provide information for the external publications on the Paralympics

Key skills, experience and qualifications required:

- Experienced in the organisation of sports events
- Ability to make presentations
- Ability to manage projects
- Knowledge of the Paralympic Games
- Experience with dealing with multiple stakeholders
- Ability to represent company at external meetings
- Understanding and knowledge of sport
- Understanding of the structure of sports politics within the UK
- Understanding of the role of the IPC

The successful candidate will be enthusiastic about sport and the Olympic Games, a team player with excellent project management skills.

Please send your CV and covering letter to recruitment@london2012.com or write to: LOCOG, HR and Recruitment, 23rd floor, 1 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LN quoting the reference PSPC02

For full details please go to www.london2012.com

"We want to be as diverse as the city we represent and welcome applications from everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith or disability".

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust

Diversity and Inclusion Manager (Disability)

£34,372 - £41,246 p.a. plus HCA
37.5 hours per week
Base: TBC

The Surrey & Borders Partnership Trust (SABP) is committed to delivering an effective and forward-looking Diversity and Inclusion business agenda. We want to deliver compliance and legislative duties, diversity competent workforce and an organisational culture that takes person centred approach as a 'must' do.

This new post, is crucial in leading and supporting the delivery of organisational development and change programme that will ensure that disability and gender in particular are integral to our employment and service delivery vision and practices.

If you are looking to making a difference to the delivery of the Trust business in an integrated and inclusive manner, can engage with diverse stakeholders covering staff, people who use our services, families, carers, communities and partners, can recognise the many challenges and bring innovative solutions, you are very much welcomed to make your mark in the SABP Trust Diversity and Inclusion Directorate.

Please apply online at www.sabp.nhs.uk
Those without internet access should call 01883 383555 quoting reference number 2222.

Closing date: 10th April 2006.

If offered a post you will be required to apply for a disclosure via the Criminal Records Bureau.
See www.disclosure.gov.uk for further details.

Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust provides community based services for people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.



• Holidays (Cont'd pg 45)

Hoe Grange Holidays
Luxurious SC log cabins
In the Derbyshire Peak District

- Full wheelchair access
- Wet-room style shower & grab rails
- On working farm

Tel: 01629 540262
www.hoegrangeholidays.co.uk

Altinkum – Turkey
2 & 3 Bed, Sleeps 6 & 8. Brand New Fully Wheelchair Accessible Luxury Accommodation on Holiday Complex. Includes, Ramps, 3 Pools, Hoist, Wheel-in Shower, Grab Rails, Raised Toilet, Wide Doors/Corridors and More. Visit www.DisabledDestinationAbroad.com
Tel: 07709 880532

Great self-catering in South West Wales
Sŵn-y-Gwynt Cottage
Sleeps 4, fabulous views, flawless luxury. TV, linen, washing machine, power all included.
Tel: 01267 237261
E-mail: antony.griew@virgin.net
FULLY ACCESSIBLE

☆☆☆☆☆

Central Devon: 3 comfortable ground floor manor farmhouse apartments, M2 wheelchair accessible. Picturesque, peaceful situation, on-site coarse fishing.
Half mile Crediton, 8 miles Exeter. No smoking/pets. Ideal holiday base. ☆☆☆☆ Graded.
Tel: 01363 772684,
www.credymanor.com

Disabled & Carers English Coastal Holidays
Spaciously built for quadriplegic owner. Ceiling hoists Elec hi/lo beds Shower/toileting chairs etc.
2 flats sleep 6 and 4 All mod cons stunning sea/mountain views Heysham, Morecambe Bay. Caravan on sheltered site, balcony, pool complex, Fishing boating lake. Filey Yorkshire Sleeps 4-6
Call Allan or Jan 01274 588142 for brochures

• Accommodation

- Searching for accessible or adapted property?
- Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
- Looking for an approved estate agent?

The Accessible Property Register
web: www.accessible-property.org.uk
Tel: 0114 2307058

0800 007 5000 www.cashelps.com
CASH HELPS A.P.S
PROBLEMS SELLING YOUR ADAPTED PROPERTY? CALL 24/7 FREE

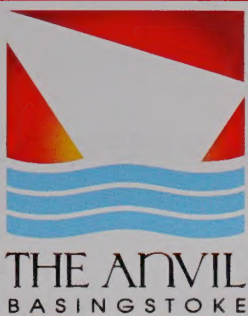
• Recruitment (on page 40 to 46)

The Anvil, Churchill Way, Basingstoke, RG21 7QR.

The Anvil

Great Music – Live

COMMUNITY & EDUCATION MANAGER



Your chance to help manage and develop The Anvil's award-winning community and education programme.

The Anvil is the finest concert hall in the south, presenting an international music programme ranging from orchestral concerts to contemporary opera and jazz, with a growing reputation for world music.

At the heart of The Anvil lies its inclusive community and education programme which begins with pre school age children and continues through all ages to working in residential homes for the elderly.

You will be working with acclaimed artists and educationalists managing projects that range from a single event to full-scale community opera and music production.

Applications welcomed from candidates with three years working in an arts or education environment.

The Anvil is seeking to be an equal opportunities employer.

Please let us know if you require information in other formats.

For an information pack and application form ring Stage Door on 01256 819797 or visit www.theanvil.org.uk

Closing date for applications is Tuesday 4 April with interviews on Thursday 20 April.

No matter Who Rochdale Council

Welcomes the contribution



ROCHDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

DISABLED PEOPLE can make



To find out more about current job vacancies visit

www.jobs@rochdale.gov.uk

• Tender



Making Social Care Better for People

Tender for the Provision of Experts by Experience in Regulated and Service Inspections Programme.

CSCI wishes to appoint local and national organisations and/or individuals to undertake the recruitment, selection, training and support of a pool of experts (people who have the experience of using social care services across all age and impairment groups) who can participate in CSCI's inspection, assessment and review activity during 2006-8.

Organisations/individuals will be required to:

- Devise and manage a recruitment and selection strategy
- Allocate, train and support experts to participate in all activities associated with inspections

An invitation to Tender Pack can be obtained from: Aileen Hamdan, User and Public Involvement Team, CSCI, 33 Greycoat Street, London SW1P 2QF, Tel: 0207 979 2087 or E-mail: aileen.hamdan@csci.gsi.gov.uk

For an informal discussion, contact Mandy Hooper, User and Public Involvement Manager on 0207 979 2028 or E-mail mandy.hooper@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Closing date for applications 13th April 2006.

ASSOCIATION FOR SPINA BIFIDA AND HYDROCEPHALUS Employment Adviser

Salary £11,225 • 17.5 hours per week • 3 year contract
Working in London - Home Based

ASBAH is seeking to appoint to the post of Employment Adviser to provide advice and support to people with spina bifida and/or hydrocephalus, to maximise their volunteering and employment opportunities. Applicants should have qualifications in occupational therapy or social work. Experience in employment, disability law, adult education or disability is desirable.

The successful applicant will have an enthusiastic and flexible approach, be able to work on their own and as part of a team, have good time management, good communication skills and be computer literate. Applicants must have access to a car.

For a detailed job description and application form please telephone Paul Dobson on 01733 555988 or email pauld@asbah.org – applications returnable by 26th April. Interviews will be held on 10th May – applicants will be notified by telephone.



WE WELCOME APPLICATIONS IRRESPECTIVE OF DISABILITY, CREED, AGE, ETHNIC ORIGIN, GENDER OR SEXUALITY.

• Course (Cont'd)

FOUNDATION COURSE IN DANCE for Disabled People

Academic Year 2006/07

CandoCo, the leading integrated dance company is now accepting applications from disabled students looking to enter into full-time professional dance training.

Contact us now for more information and an application pack:

Email: foundationcourse@candoco.co.uk

Phone: 020 7704 6845

Taster Day: 1 April 2006

Auditions: 21 April and 30 May 2006

For more information on **CandoCo Dance Company**, the current **season programme** and **tour dates**, our education programme including **Youth Dance Company Cando II**

visit:

www.candoco.co.uk

CandoCo

• TV Documentary

Wanted For TV Documentary!

6 confident disabled men to join a fun and sexy dance group as part of a Channel 4 film. We are looking for all types of disability and all levels of experience. If you are interested in finding out more then contact: struttingyourstuff@hotmail.co.uk or call 07970 113694.

• Services



BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC

Advice and treatment from newborn babies to adults. A wide range of conditions treated, some of these include movement, posture, balance, walking, coordination, hand-function and learning difficulties.

Specialise in cerebral palsy and neurological conditions. Farshideh Bondarenko DIP PHYSIO MCSP SRP.

web: www.neuro-physio.co.uk tel: 0208 998 9403

SUFFOLK SMALL VILLAGE near Aldeburgh. Spacious 3/4 Bedrooms detached house that incorporates a ground floor extension with a bedroom, 2nd bathroom, sitting room/4th bedroom and laundry/2nd kitchen. Easy wheelchair access (via gentle slope and ride across threshold). Ample off-road parking. Labour-saving garden with raised bed, paved paths around borders and modest lawn. £289,000 O.I.R.O. Tel: 01728 602947. email: us2@ajcorral.u-net.com

• Holidays (Cont'd)

FUERTEVENTURA BEAUTIFUL NEW 4 BED VILLA ON SEAFRONT IN CENTRE OF CORRALEGO. MASTER BEDROOM AND ENSUITE FULLY WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE. HEATED PRIVATE POOL. EMAIL: Carolinecoogan@yahoo.co.uk. Tel: 00353 419804596

Hopton Holiday Village.

Heated access caravans available on Norfolk coast between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. 2 bedroomed unit suitable for wheelchair access and 3 bedroomed unit suitable for persons with some mobility. For further details contact 01493 603845.

10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND

Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12, fully accessible and large. King size bed with ensuite bathroom, wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01805 601147.

Cornwall – Nr Truro.

2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

Fuertaventura

2 bed apt. Small private complex adapted for disabled people. Walk in shower. Shower chair. No hills. 10 min walk to town. 5 min to beach. Phone Carol 0034629990063

Hartgrove Farm

Shaftsbury Dorset Award winning holiday cottages on working farm. A really lovely holiday for disabled guests and their families. Glorious countryside and views. Logfires. C.H. Wheel-in shower. Mobile Hoist and other equipment. Tel: 01747 811830 www.hartgrovefarm.co.uk

Normandy France

Magnificent accessible farm house in beautiful 1 acre garden. Sleeps 14 (6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms) huge G.F. ensuite bedroom, Wheel-in shower, bath, mobile hoist. Superb heated swimming pool, 25 mins unspoilt sandy beaches. Only 1 hr from port. Tel: 01747 812019 www.normandyfarmhouses.co.uk

Algarve Carvoeiro

Spacious private villa with pool and hoist overlooking golf course. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms including wheel-in shower. Totally level throughout. For more information call Debbie Wells on 01277 354313

An idyllic & peaceful cumbria beauty spot. The Tranquil Otter. Lux lodges with sauna & whirlpool bath/hot-tub, logburner. All lakeside position with picture book views. Outstanding w/c accessible lodges, paths, shops etc. Wheelchair Boat! 01228 576661. www.thetranquilotter.co.uk

Cotswold Charm

Self-catering cottages at Top Farm in Chipping Campden

Tranquil hamlet of Westington 600 yards from historic curved High Street. 4 cottages, ensuite, sleep 3-6 each. Rick Cottage (6) – wheelchair access ground floor kitchen with adjust height table, etc., ensuite bed, lounge & conservatory. Hoist hire & specialist care, etc. available via links on our website.

Web: www.cotswoldcharm.co.uk Call Michael on 01386 840164. Fax: 01386 841883. Email: cotswoldcharm@fsmail.net

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DN next month

All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 29 April

UNIVERSITY YARN

DN talks to Alex Kemp (left), the new national representative for the National Union of Disabled Students.

TEST DRIVE

Motoring correspondent Helen Smith tests drives a new drive – from conversion, the Openroad Kangoo

GRAB A GARDEN

See our Access All Areas supplement to be in with a chance of winning a free landscape design worth £150 and £1,000 off the creation of your dream accessible garden.

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the Buckingham Coolhand in the February issue were: L.Gibson from Middlesex, R.Steele from Liverpool, A.Mullis from Cornwall, J.Platt from S. Yorks, D.Reeve from Wolverhampton, M.Lee from Hants, R.Maxfield from Doncaster, S.Dixon from Manchester, J.Bail from Somerset and Y.Patel from Middlesex.

The winners of the Gowrings Mobility atlas were: N.Howarth from Cumbria, A.Lodge-Johnston from Tyne and Wear, G.Smith from Essex, J.Drea from Burnley, D.Woolley from Lytham, K.Moxey from Devon, E.Hamill from Essex, A. Roberts from St Helens, P.D.Moore from Wolverhampton and S.Diamond from London.

The winners of the Murderball DVD were: R.Bennett from Suffolk, G.Pritchard from Bristol, M.Gunning from Hants, J.Wakeham from Bristol, S.Ellis from Derbyshire, M.Rabeattie from Lancashire, C.Lowe from Northampton, W.Davies from Manchester, G.Beasley from Hengoed, S.Bee from Lancashire, S.Whitehead from Bury, N.Haynes from Barnsley, J.Williams from Hull, P.Whyatt from Waterlooville, J.Ratty from Harlow, E.Taylor from Merseyside, P.Wilson from St Leonards on Sea, G.Spencer from W.Yorks, B.Taylor from Rochdale and M.Koran from Leicester.

to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and

send for FREE to Disability Now, Freeport WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk

Switch Stick ☐ Aquabowl ☐



terms & conditions

Closing date for entrants: 21.04.06 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates • Winners may be announced in DN • In association with Switch Sticks and Canine Concepts. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included ☐

SWITCH STICKS



Walking sticks can often be dull and merely functional. Be stylish and fashionable with a walking stick with a difference from Switch Sticks, who are giving away four Switch Sticks worth £22.49 each. These original and colourful sticks combine safety and practicality with fashion and fun. They come in four designs, each with their own pattern: stripes with a blue handle; waves with a brown handle; circles with a black handle and mosaic with a green handle. Colours include hot pink, bright blue, emerald green and pillar box red. Switch Sticks are giving away one of each design.

The sticks are made of lightweight aluminium, are adjustable, and fold into four for easy carrying. They come with a water-resistant carry bag.

For your chance to win a Switch Stick, tick 'Switch Stick' in the entry form.

For more information on Switch Sticks and the range of products, including upcoming designs, tel: 08451 114 114, www.switchsticks.com



AQUABOWL



Finding fresh water for your assistance dog on a car journey or long walk need never be a problem again with an Aquabowl from Canine Concepts, who are giving away three two-litre Aquabowls, worth £12.50 each. The bowl can be filled with

water before you leave home and monitored so that your dog can have a bit at a time, ensuring that you don't run out. A four-litre bowl is also available at £17.50.

Convenient and easy to use, the Aquabowl is easy to clean and is also portable, making it ideal for longer outings.

Canine Concepts also has dog training aids, beds, toys and books.

For your chance to win an Aquabowl, tick 'Aquabowl' in the entry form.

For more on Canine Concepts and its range of products, tel: 01608 73 83 77, www.canineconcepts.co.uk



V W Shuttle



Based on the ever popular T5, this VW Shuttle is an excellent vehicle for wheelchair accessibility. With easy access, good visibility, flexible seating arrangement not to forget ultimate comfort and maximum safety, the Shuttle is a must for those looking for more internal space.



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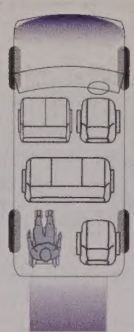
VW Shuttle SE

Affordable luxury the all new Shuttle SE comes with high grade interior and the Lewis Reed unique seating system 4-8 seats, short and long wheelbase, available with manual or automatic gearbox.



VW Caravelle Executive

Top of the range luxury with the award winning Caravelle range. Up to six seats, manual or automatic with several different engine sizes, as well as rear or side wheelchair access.



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All new and exclusive to Lewis Reed VW's - Lowering suspension

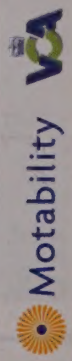
For increased comfort and ease of use, the all new lowering suspension system from Lewis Reed removes the need for a winch inside the vehicle by decreasing the slope of the access ramp. The improved entry and exit to the vehicle is quicker and easier for both wheelchair user and carer.

The VW range starts from just £16,450 converted, the all new lowering suspension system, just £495[†]



See the difference, request a brochure or free no obligation home demonstration today. Call 0845 345 0127 (lo-call rate) or visit www.lewisreedgroup.co.uk

Enjoy the difference



[†] Additional price in lieu of winch in the vehicle. [‡] Free options only available on stated models
*Model shown have feature only available as optional extra. OTR prices assume zero VAT and RFL exempt.
All prices correct at time of going to print. Vehicles subject to availability.

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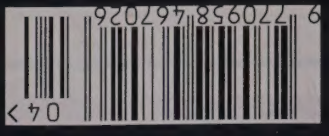


Blunkett bites back

Rumours, resignations and regrets

'We've got it, so should you'

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Jobs p40-46 and on our website: www.disabilitynow.org.uk